Interview with John H. Holdridge

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR JOHN H. HOLDRIDGE

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is July 20, 1995. This is an interview with John H. Holdridge, being conducted for the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Could you tell me where and when you were born and a little about your family?

HOLDRIDGE: Too many years ago, 1924, in Brooklyn, New York. My father was an Army officer and at that time, stationed at Governor's Island. The Prospect Park area is where my family tells me that they lived at the time. It was within an easy commute, I presume, by subway or ferry to Governor's Island, which was the headquarters, I believe, of what they called The First Corps area in those days.

Q: Did your father come from a military family too?

HOLDRIDGE: No, my father was what you might call one of those who sort of pulled himself up by his own bootstraps. He was originally from Pontiac, Michigan where his father, I suppose, had something to do with the automobile industry but also tried farming for a while in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. And my father was not, shall we say, too well financially endowed. But he worked his way through high school and then he ran into someone who took a liking to him, thought the young man had possibilities, and got an

appointment for him to West Point. So he managed to survive that ordeal. He graduated in the class of April 1917. That curtailed only three months or two months from the original full four year course that was shortened because of the entry of the United States into World War I. So, he went from there, he chose the cavalry and was stationed in Fort Bliss along the Mexican border. Really nothing very much happened down there.

Q: The Pancho Villa thing was all over by then?

HOLDRIDGE: That was all over and done with. By then, he had married my mother, a Brooklyn girl, and they set up housekeeping at Fort Bliss, Texas. But I didn't arrive on the scene for a while. After being in Fort Bliss for a period, he was then sent to the army of occupation in Germany and was stationed in Koblenz and in Paris. And my mother had some wonderful memories of life in those days. The poor Germans, of course, were starving to death because of the reparations put on them by the French, but the occupation troops lived in a little, insulated world that was very pleasant indeed. It was like the occupation of Japan after World War II or Germany after World War II. And then my father was ordered back to the United States, temporary duty at Governor's Island, when I came along. Then he became an assistant professor of history at West Point. So my first four years, really, were spent at West Point, from 1924 to about 1929.

Q: Let's sort of continue on. From after you left in '29, where to?

HOLDRIDGE: Fort Riley, Kansas. And from Fort Riley to duty in Chicago with, I forget what particular corps headquarters was located there, just down by the Chicago stockyards. And my father was one of those who was involved in the training of reserves and National Guard units. Among other things, of course, there were also some regular army posts there, Fort Sheridan was not too distant from Chicago. The area really encompassed quite a broad section of the north central part of the United States. So we were there, let me see now, until 1932. And then he was transferred to Fort Bliss, Texas.

Q: Back again?

HOLDRIDGE: Back in that area, although by this time he had transferred from the cavalry to the Adjutant Generals Department. He became Post Adjutant at Fort Bliss, Texas and also Adjutant of the First Cavalry Division, which in those days was still riding horses, believe it or not. The 82nd Field Artillery, the 7th Cavalry, the 8th Cavalry were also stationed at Fort Bliss. I think there were a number of small cavalry posts, I can't recall precisely what regiments were involved, stationed along the American-Mexican border. This goes back to the days of Pancho Villa again, at Fort DA Russell and Fort Brown and so on. And in addition to his other duties as Post Adjutant, he was also responsible for overseeing the CCC in that part of the world.

Q: The Civilian Conservation Corps.

HOLDRIDGE: That is correct. So we had a very lovely time at Fort Bliss. For a while, we lived off the post and then on the post in a house, a beautiful old, Victorian, Gothic-style, right next to the commanding general's quarters. But all things have to come to an end and in 1934, he was ordered to the Philippines. Fort Stotsenberg, it was called in those days. It became better known later as Clark Field. And there we had a regiment of Philippine Scouts cavalry, the 26th Cavalry, a regiment of Philippine Scouts artillery, the 24th Field Artillery, and unique in the US Army, Battery A, 23rd Field Artillery, which was a mountain gun battery. Since the US Army didn't have any mountain guns already made in US arsenals, they were using captured World War I artillery from the Austrians. But anyway, we had a wonderful time in the Philippines, very exciting and in a sense, rewarding to my father not only professionally but financially because he was paid in dollars. A dollar, in those days, was worth two pesos, and a peso in the Philippines could buy as much as a dollar could buy. We were able to save enough funds so that at the conclusion of the tour in 1937 my father was able to make arrangements to get us up to China. We took a Dutch boat from Manila, sailed to Hong Kong, spent some time there in which we got to Canton, went up the coast, a brief stop in Amoy, then a few days in Shanghai, then over to

Kobe, Japan, then to Tokyo, and then went to Kyoto and then from there, back by the way of Osaka to Tungku, we use to call it, what is now the new port of China where the river that runs through Tianjin comes out into the Yellow Sea. And from Tianjin (which we called Tientsin in those days) we went to Beijing, known then as Peking, and spent virtually, well, over two months in that place.

Q: How old were you at the time?

HOLDRIDGE: I was twelve.

Q: So you were really absorbing?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes. So that is one of the reasons I am where I am today. That is, I fell in love with China in Beijing. I had my own rickshaw coolie. We stayed at a place called the College of Chinese Studies where missionaries and business people came to learn Chinese. Very pleasant up there in the Tatar city in the northwest quadrant, I beg your pardon, northeast quadrant of Peking. I just wandered freely around the place and just saw everything that I wanted to. We got up to the Great Wall, the Temple of Heaven, the Summer Palace, all of these beautiful cultural aspects of Chinese civilization.

Q: What was the date of the Marco Polo incident?

HOLDRIDGE: That was July the 7th, I believe, 1937. So we just missed it. We had left in May. In those days the US Army transport used to stop in Chinhuangdao—that was because we still had a regiment of infantry, the 15th Infantry in Tientsin. So the transport would bring in replacements, and the people going home from China could get aboard and those, like ourselves, who were on extended leave got on the transport and then sailed back to the United States. I might mention also in Peking were the “horse marines.” They had theoretically a regiment, I think it consisted probably of two battalions, one company of which rode horses. None of our units in the army were at full strength because of financial problems. My father, in fact, had taken a 15% pay cut while we were in Chicago simply

because the government was trying to economize. But anyway, from China we sailed back to San Francisco; from San Francisco we picked up another transport, went through the Panama Canal and all the way to New York City, where my father was on temporary duty at Governor's Island for a while. My father then, after a period of temporary duty, let's see, we arrived probably about, figuring we left Beijing or Peking as it was called in those days, in May, we got to New York City probably in the end of June or July. His next assignment was to the Army Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. But that didn't start until September...

Q: We are talking about 1937?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes. We dangled around there for a little bit while he worked on Governor's Island, and we lived in New York City. Eventually, we bought a car and drove to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Now I've told you a lot about my history...

Q: Where you're coming from and all that is part of the story. So you are in high school by this time?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, and I went through the 9th grade at the post school in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. And then, after my father had graduated from the Command and General Staff School, now known as a college by the way, he was ordered to Washington to work in the Adjutant Generals Department here in Washington. I went to Western High School in Washington, DC, now the Duke Ellington School for the Performing Arts. I graduated from that high enough in my class to get into Dartmouth without any particular problem. After a year and a half in Dartmouth, I was able to get into West Point.

Q: So you got into West Point what year?

HOLDRIDGE: 1942.

Q: We were in the war.

HOLDRIDGE: We were in the war. I was in Dartmouth when I heard of the attack on Pearl Harbor over the radio. That made it possible for me to get into West Point. My father, still in the Adjutant Generals Department, was able to get a waiver—I have a perforated eardrum, which normally would have kept me out, physically speaking, but he got me a waiver. So I went into West Point with the class of 1945 in July 1942 and graduated with it, subsequently, in June 1945.

Q: Obviously everyone was following the war, particularly at West Point, but what sort of picture, were you getting much in the way the world view that would stand you in good stead in your little world of diplomacy?

HOLDRIDGE: Absolutely. One of the nice things about West Point was that while the emphasis was more on military art and engineering, and that is the degree that I got, MS in Military Art and Engineering, they also did not neglect the social studies. So I studied modern European history, economics, political science, also military instructor training, which was making speeches, getting up on my hind legs and talking to people, trying to get ideas across. I thought the education atop what I picked up at Dartmouth, where I studied Aristotle, philosophy, French, and I had to study Spanish at West Point, but always in the back of my mind was the idea I would like to go back to China, which I told you I had fallen in love with in Peking as a twelve-year old. So, I kept my eyes open for an opportunity, but the closest I got to it—the war being over in Europe when I graduated—there was still war with Japan going on. I picked field artillery as my branch, was sent to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and was out firing 35 pounds of TNT in 105 millimeter shells off into the distance at Fort Sill, when somebody came up and said, “Hey, I just heard on the radio that we dropped a bomb that is the equivalent of 10,000 tons of TNT on a place in Japan called Hiroshima.” And we looked at each other and we looked at this 35 pound shell we had been lobbing off and we kind of packed up our effects and went home.

Q: You left the army after your commitment, is that it?

HOLDRIDGE: Well actually, I left before. I was sent to Korea. Elements of my class went to Europe and wound up in good places like Vienna or Salzburg and so on, but I ended up in a repple-depple, so-called, at Del Carmen, PI, Philippine Islands, which was only about 20 miles from Fort Stotsenberg, my old home, and from there sent first to Japan and then to Korea. Japan was just a transit spot. I spent the years 1945 from about October, when I got to Korea, until November 1947 in Korea, to begin with as an artillery officer, but we didn't have any guns. We were on occupation duty, and I was in command of headquarters and headquarters battery, 48th Field Artillery. I was a brand new army officer, a 2nd lieutenant with no particular experience. I found myself, the only officer, and 67 enlisted men, out in the middle of nowhere, a place called Hoengsong in Korea.

Q: Where is that located?

HOLDRIDGE: That is located about half way between Seoul and the east coast of Korea, Kangnung. There I was, learning the hard way how to run men and learning the mores of the country. If it hadn't been for the fact that I had a political advisor, a Catholic padre from the Columban Society of Dublin, Ireland who used to tell me (in an Irish accent), “Watch out for that man he's got irons in the fire,”...

Q: Let's talk about Korea and, obviously a second lieutenant sitting in an American unit, your view is somewhat limited, but could you tell me how Korea impressed you in '45?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, it was a country which I had studied, by the way, in a Far Eastern history course at West Point, and I could recall from that the Tokugawa invasion of Korea, which lasted some twelve years, back there around the 15th century. The Koreans had never really recovered from that invasion, it was a desperately poor country at that particular time, most everybody living in the countryside in mud huts and hardly any amenities, it was a tough life. I never saw a garden in Korea, except in Seoul in the Royal Palaces, and people used to have to get up extremely early to work 16 hour days in order to survive. Of course, all these things have improved tremendously. I've been back to

Korea a few times much more recently, but in those days it was really the end of the line for the US Army. The people there had to get their supplies from 8th Army headquarters in Japan, who skimmed off everything, and even getting a light bulb was a difficult thing, but anyway, when I was in Hoengsong — later I was moved to Wonju, which was 12 miles south—I was responsible as a military governor of the county. And I traveled around by jeep a great deal, often taking my Catholic padre with me, my political advisor, and looking at the sights, the sounds and the smells and absorbing them from Korea.

Q: I think anyone who has experienced a honey pit in the good old days will never forget that.

HOLDRIDGE: Unforgettable, absolutely.

Q: I used to get one, I was there during the Korean War, and we would take a truck to dinner and back, and I couldn't decide if it was worse before dinner or after dinner. You said military governor, what does that mean?

HOLDRIDGE: I was simply responsible for good order and discipline of the population. I fired the police chief of Hoengsong because he had been a Japanese collaborator and the people hated him. But that caused a great stink with the military government chain of command. I was in two chains of command. One was the 7th Division chain of command, I was in the 7th Division, but also under the 24th Corps there was a military government chain of command. And they didn't like the idea of my doing this, but they had to accept it. I learned a lot in those days by “negative example,” as the Chinese would say. All the mistakes I made, I hope that I haven't remade too many of them.

Q: You know there has been a lot of criticism in Korea, which continues today, about when we came in, I think it was General Hodges who came in...

HOLDRIDGE: General Courtney Hodges was the Governor, General Arthur Lerch the Military Governor.

Q: And basically he wanted to deal with whoever was in authority there, so he picked people like your police chief, he took too many Japanese or Japanese supporters out of the Korean things because they were the ruling body and didn't make a great effort to establish the resisters at that point.

HOLDRIDGE: You're correct. Well, after about six months out there in the hinterland, I was transferred willy-nilly from the field artillery into the engineers. It suddenly dawned on the US occupation forces that we were not going to leave Korea. We had hoped originally to work out with the Soviets in some kind of joint commission, a future for the Koreans where the Koreans would run a unified country by themselves. But of course the line was drawn at the 38th parallel, what was on the communist side remained under their control and so we had no option but to stay on. The Koreans did not like that at all. There was some talk of a UN trusteeship and I got a little demonstration in front of my headquarters in Hoengsong, opposed to trusteeship. I still have some photographs of that somewhere. But anyway, eventually then, we had to make room for a permanent presence in South Korea. Engineer officers were at a premium. Since I had an engineering degree from West Point in military art and engineering, I was transferred to the 13th Engineers and spent the rest of my time in Korea building dependent housing or refitting old Japanese houses so they could be suitable for families, putting in a water supply system for the Yongsan area of Seoul where the 7th Division was quartered and, in general, doing all the kinds of things that one would do as a post engineer.

Q: From your perspective, what were you getting when you would be in contact with the colonels, lieutenants and generals, etc., or the staff about the feelings toward the Koreans? I mean were they just a bunch of gooks and we have to do this?

HOLDRIDGE: Unfortunately, among many of the people who had come up via Okinawa and then found themselves in Korea, there was a feeling that these people were somehow inferior. Indeed, General Courtney Hodges put out a corps-wide memorandum to the effect, “do not call them gooks.” Well, I didn't see it that way. I was able, when I was in

Seoul, to visit the various palaces of the old Korean aristocracy, in fact we had a member of the old Korean aristocracy working for the 13th Engineers as a contractor, Dorothy Yee or Lee of the old Yee dynasty. I got to know her, a very splendid person. Of course there were a lot of sharpies amongst the various contractors who worked for the 7th Division, 13th Engineers, but you could see behind this facade, all I could say was I understood fully, I thought as much as I could understand Asia at the time, that, as I said, the Tokugawa invasion of Korea which had occurred some hundreds of years before, the Japanese destroyed everything. They cut down the trees, destroyed the walls of the cities, committed genocide among the Korean people, and the country was really devastated. So I could understand some of the sentiments of the Korean people and working with the contractors and working with Korean laborers, I could get some sense of the attitudes and the culture and customs of the country.

Q: Just to get a little feel, were you getting from the military that those of you who were in Korea, well you are in a second rate country, the first rate country, if you were going to deal with it, was Japan. Was this the feeling?

HOLDRIDGE: I can say what we thought about was how we were at the end of the supply line and it was hard to get almost anything we needed to give us a few amenities. We took former Japanese barracks and reconditioned them, that was one of my jobs, and made them habitable for the American soldiers of the 7th Division, of which I was a part, and did the best that we could, but we always were right up against the edge trying to get the material we wanted, what we really needed. We built motion picture theaters and that was something, and baseball fields, and whatever, but we had this sense of being way out in the middle of nowhere. The end of this long, long supply line with everyone else taking off the top before it got to you.

Q: Were you getting any rumbles from the China civil war at that time?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, what we were getting was rumbles from the way the North was being handled. We had tried, as I said, to work out this joint commission on the reunification of Korea with the Soviets and got nowhere. One of my classmates' father was General Arch (Archibald) Arnold, the Commanding General, for a while, of the 7th Division, who was then assigned as our delegate to this joint commission, but for the most part, nothing much happened. There were a couple of visits to Pyongyang, and the Russians came down a couple of times to Seoul, but it was quite clear that no political resolution was going to take place. In the meantime, according to the G-2 of the 7th Division, no, I guess it was the G-3...

Q: What was a G-3?

HOLDRIDGE: A G-3 was the man who was the operations officer of the 7th Division, a bright, young major who had been through the Okinawa campaign. I remember a briefing he gave to officers of the 7th Division about what was going on in the North to the effect that under the Soviets and under Kim Il Sung, an army of at least a quarter of a million men was being created—all arms: tanks, artillery, trucks, all of the weaponry from Soviet sources. As of the time I left Korea, this particular army was able to go into combat position from an approach march, which is a difficult military maneuver, to go along a road and then peel off your units in the proper order and into the proper places. All we had in the South was something called the Korean Constabulary. Our Koreans, many of whom, I suppose, especially the officers, were veterans of the Japanese Army, constituted a kind of a backup police force, a constabulary not really organized into fully divisional units, not with supporting arms. All they had was captured Japanese rifles. We had a Korean constabulary company attached to the 13th Engineers. When I pulled guard duty, we had guard posts all over the place, people guarding pieces of equipment scattered all over the 7th Division area of Seoul and to inspect all those posts was a tedious, long job. Anyway, I would take my Korean officer of the day with me when I was officer of the day and we would go together. And I remember an episode when the Korean officer of the day caught

one of his guards asleep and that was a rather rigorous going over that the soldier got—slapped in the face, back and forth in the best Japanese military tradition.

Q: Were you at all involved in the suppression of communist uprisings in parts of South Korea?

HOLDRIDGE: Not directly. They turned out the tanks from the 7th Division to put down riots in Seoul, but I was not immediately involved in this. And we were aware that in the south of Korea, around the area of Taegu and so on, the 40th Division, which was our sister division in Korea, a Californian National Guard unit, was in the field for over thirty days under combat conditions in 1946, I guess it was the end of '46 into '47, trying to put down a communist inspired uprising to take over all of Korea, which didn't succeed thanks to the US military presence. So Communism and the threat of the North became very much a part of our life and doctrine when I was there.

Q: During this period what was happening in China itself? I mean were you getting anything from there?

HOLDRIDGE: Very little. We of course read the Stars and Stripes, and I was aware that the Marines were having their problems in places like Shandong and that the American position was not particularly comfortable. Of course, I also read Time and various other American newspapers which made their way in, and I was aware of what the US was trying to do, such as the Marshall mission in China, to try to bring the Communists and the Kuomintang together, and the fighting in Manchuria. But I really was more concerned with the immediate problem of trying to build up the American presence in Korea, to make it a permanent one.

Q: You left there when?

HOLDRIDGE: I left there in 1947. I should mention that in 1946 when I was stationed in Seoul, a tremendous downfall occurred, rain, and I was in charge of all sorts of equipment,

trying to apportion jobs here and there to various units, parts of companies to do tasks. In fact, I was the post engineer of the 7th Division. But anyway, when it rained we couldn't get a piece of equipment to move. The trucks were all up to their axles in mud. Everything else was mud. So I went through my in-box and, lo and behold, I ran across a form that said that examination for the Foreign Service. So I looked at that, I looked at this gosh-awful scene of soaking rain and immobilized equipment and said, there must be something better than this, and the Foreign Service seemed attractive. All you had to do was send your name in. So I sent my name in, and in due course, some months later, I was told to report to the 24th Corps University and take examinations for the Foreign Service. I was there for two days, taking the old type exams and their questions, and true and false, multiple choice and also, I took exams in two languages. I had taken French when I was in high school, but I had also taken Spanish at West Point. In those days, you could take exams in both or, either of them. I don't think I passed, but the aggregate of the two was enough to put me in. But I didn't know that.

So a year went by, and I proceeded with my regular duties. And then two or three months before I was due to leave Korea, a letter floated in from the board of examiners of the Foreign Service that said, please be present for your oral examinations three weeks from now in Washington, DC. And, holy smokes, how could I get back there in three weeks, there was no way. I had heard nothing about even passing the darn exam. I assumed I had passed because I wouldn't have been up to the board of examiners otherwise. I wrote them a letter saying I would be back at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and that I was being transferred in early 1948. I asked would it be possible to defer my appearance in front of the board of examiners until I was back in Fort Belvoir. They came back and said yes. So in November of 1947, I got on a US Army transport and sailed off back across the Pacific to California, picked up a car I had bought from another officer in Korea, and drove across the country. A friend was with me, and I picked up his wife, too, from Houston, Texas. And then we kept on going and came to Fort Belvoir to which we were both assigned. Eventually in January 1948 I went down to the board of examiners, in a temporary building

in the vicinity of where the State Department is now located, sat before them, and to my utter astonishment, I passed.

Q: What sort of questions did they ask?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, when they questioned and looked at me I was in full uniform. Here was this group of people who were rather formidable—old Joe Green, who was the chairman of the board of examiners, with all due respect sir, he looked a lot like you.

Q: I had Cromwell Richards in my day.

HOLDRIDGE: They looked at me in uniform, and then Joe Greenasked me, he said, tell me all about the Battle of Gettysburg, why it actually took place, the events that led up to it, everything you know about the Battle of Gettysburg except don't go into the battle itself. So I had to explain Lee's philosophy of trying to carry the war to the North, trying to gain European attention, and possibly inflict a decisive defeat on the Union army. And that pleased them. Then they gave me a piece of French to translate, and I translated that satisfactorily enough. And they just sort of ran it to see how I would bear up, I guess, under pressure. The main thing. I passed, “with distinction,” which meant my security clearances were rushed through. I left the army in March 1948, Fort Belvoir, and I was in the Foreign Service by mid-May.

Q: Tell me, while all this was going on were you able to run across any Foreign Service people to find out what this peculiar profession was about?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, there was a guy by the name of Charlie Thayer in Seoul, Korea. He was one of those on General Hodge's staff.

Q: He was a West Pointer too.

HOLDRIDGE: He was a West Pointer too. He was a rather interesting character, very lively and when I was interested in taking the Foreign Service exam, he had already taken

them long ago. I got ahold of him at some function on an occasion and got some feel what the Foreign Service was like. And as I saw it at the time, it was probably very much like the regular army in the old days. That is you had a corps of people who had passed exams, who comprised a kind of special segment of American society, and who were representing their country abroad. Since I had lived a fairly extensive part of my life abroad that offered no real challenges to me or threats or whatever. It seemed I could move into that with one no problem. That is, in fact, the way it turned out.

Q: I'm trying to catch the times as they were seen and experienced as we move farther on. You came into the Foreign Service in May of 1948. Did you have any trouble getting out of the army?

HOLDRIDGE: No, as a matter of fact, I was released from the army for the “good of the Service.” There was a clause in the US Army regulations which, as interpreted, used “the good of the Service” to release me, and I was able to move into the Foreign Service almost immediately as a consequence. I think I waited, as I said, from March until May for my FBI clearances to come through.

Q: When you came in was there a basic officers course, sometimes there was and sometimes people were thrown in like infantry replacements?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, actually there was a course. It was at the old Foreign Service Institute, a building down on C street, long since torn down, of course. And the Foreign Service Institute was in it. I was with a class of sort of special cases. I came in, as I said, quickly and I didn't have to wait until a regular Foreign Service class was established. They had a number of Japanese language officers who had already been commissioned in the Foreign Service and then sent off to Japanese language school, Cal or the University of Michigan or whatever. They were all brought in at the same time. There was a tight little group of about fifteen of us, very unusual circumstances. The reason, I guess, being at

that time, as usual, the State Department was hard up for funds, and they just threw us in under a guy by the name of Haxie Smith.

Q: A very famous linguist.

HOLDRIDGE: A very famous linguist, a linguistic scientist. Quite a character, and I guess the linguistic scientist's approach colored the way he handled the Foreign Service trainees. We had, what I guess you would call an abbreviated course. It was six weeks. And in the middle of this, I got a call from a fellow by the name of Phil Sprouse, who I didn't know from Adam, but I went down to see Phil, who was the director of what used to be known as the Office of Chinese Affairs. And he asked me if I was interested in taking Chinese. I told you about my interest in getting back to China already. And I said, of course. I mean this was something I was shooting at for a long time. And it turned out that there was money enough to send me to Cornell to start with to study a year of Chinese there. But there was no money to bring people back from overseas for this. I was in a very good position.

Q: I had an interview with someone who had happened to be in Peking at the time and was able to go right into Chinese training there because he happened to be there, to save money.

HOLDRIDGE: Right. There was quite a few of my colleagues I got to know very well who were a year ahead of me and were able to make it to Peking. I never did. When I met my wife at Cornell, I rather promised her that after we were married we would go to China and Peking where I would continue my Chinese language study. That was the program then, but unfortunately political events intervened, and the Chinese communists took Peking the latter part of 1948. The Korean War, which I followed avidly in the newspapers followed, and then north China fell, and Peking became isolated and we pulled all our people out in 1950 anyway.

Q: I'd like to back track a little to the basic Foreign Service course. What kind of things were they teaching you?

HOLDRIDGE: They told us about political reporting, “Sir, I have the honor to report”—how to write a despatch. They told us about the consular problems and how important consular work was. They talked a bit about economics. We had, in fact, oh gosh, the name I should remember, Mr. X..., George Kennan came down and gave us lectures...

Q: He was policy planning at the time.

HOLDRIDGE: Policy planning. And in a way, what we had was kind of a course which was unusual in that it was more like the mid-career course in the Foreign Service or the advanced course at FSI.

Q: One thing they were all playing on, this was true even in my time, which was back later in '55, the student body was almost to a man pretty much veterans which meant you were dealing with a different breed of cat then later on when you were getting people straight out of college.

HOLDRIDGE: In fact, as I recall, every person in my Foreign Service class was a veteran. They were mostly Japanese language trainees. There was one who had been off at Berkeley studying Korean. Unfortunately, I can not recall the name—it will come back to me—who had his real problems later on when he actually got out there. He made a few egregious mistakes which pretty much got him kicked out of the Foreign Service. Be that as it may, there was Owen Zurhellen, and a guy by the name of Seidensticker who later left the Foreign Service and became very well known as a translator of Japanese or English into Japanese and so on. And Dave Osborn, very well known in the Foreign Service. Very bright and unusual people, I thought.

Q: When you went to Cornell was there a thrust to... In the first place, can you talk a little about the Chinese training but also the attitude towards China? You know, China was up in flames by this time.

HOLDRIDGE: We all felt, I suppose, very upset about what was going on there and not knowing anything much about these strange people who had come in from Heilongjiang by way of Manchuria and what they represented. The harsh aspects of the Communist rule began to be apparent while I was at Cornell. I was there in 1948 and '49. After I got through with my FSI course, the basics, I also spent the rest of the summer there trying to cram a whole year of Chinese into the months that were left before September, which I did. This was so I could go off and be a second year student at Cornell, not just a basic student. But anyway, we were all very much bothered by it, and of course, while at Cornell I had a roommate who had been in China, Arthur Rosen, who retired, oh, some years back. For years, in fact, he was president of the National Committee on US-China Relations, and still has a connection with that organization. He had been in Shanghai with the consulate general.

Q: Every time one takes a language, one gets indoctrinated by the teachers. I went through such things getting Serbian. Were you getting a line as well as the language or an approach to China by your teachers?

HOLDRIDGE: I certainly hope so. My principal teacher in Cornell was a man named Harold Shadick and Harold had been at Yenching University teaching English, as it happened, but he had also studied Chinese, and he was also a master in classical Chinese. And he gave us a feel for the Chinese classics—Confucius, Lao Tzu, Motzu, and all the rest of these great Chinese contributors to Chinese philosophy. His assistant was from Shanghai, Lydia Wu. And Lydia later became Harold Shadick's wife when Harold's first wife died. Harold just this last year died unfortunately. Lydia went to live with family members out in California, and just this year I heard that she died, too. We still revere them. I got quite a feel of China from them. We had a non-Chinese type as a linguistic

scientist, a fellow who was supposed to teach us Chinese. And I think he was about two chapters ahead of us in the workbook. His name was Charles Hockett. So these three led us through written Chinese, spoken Chinese, and on top of that we studied, Far Eastern economics and Japanese economics from other people around. We had a Far Eastern studies seminar, where I met my wife. Being at Cornell was really quite an exciting thing for me and really broadened horizons in that we got behind the scenes. I did my thesis, I could have gotten an MA except our friend Haxie Smith thought we shouldn't be wasting government finances by doing things for ourselves, the idiot. Anyway, I did my thesis on the railways in China and how foreign companies used construction of railroads to grab ahold of revenues from various parts of the Chinese budget and to establish political control over the areas in which the railroads were built.

Q: You must have learned from the American experience.

HOLDRIDGE: Yes indeed. Our railroad giants who built the railroads across the wild west.

Q: When did you leave Cornell?

HOLDRIDGE: I left Cornell after the summer of 1949 to go to Harvard. Thanks to the Communists occupying Beijing, it was impossible to get to Beijing at the time (or Peking like we were still calling it), and so the State Department sent us, a few of us, to Harvard. With us was Arthur Rosen, although Art had enough Chinese. He was more interested in trying to find the right maiden to marry. Which I hope Arthur won't mind if he reads this. There was also Paul Frillman, who had been a missionary in China, a Lutheran missionary in Changsha, which is down in the Hunan province. He spoke Chinese quite well, but with this ferocious Hunan dialect. A third person was Steve Comiskey. Steve had also been at Cornell, and Steve, I don't know why he took Chinese, he was a wonderfully good Spanish speaker, and he had married a bride in Bilbao where he had been vice consul, so I think what he said was he took Chinese figuring China was one place in the world which would take him as far as he could possibly get from his mother-in-law.

Q: You were at Harvard for how long?

HOLDRIDGE: I was at Harvard, again, for a full year's course followed by a summer session.

Q: Is there a difference between the Harvard approach and the Cornell approach?

HOLDRIDGE: Oh, yes. The Cornell approach is much more practical. Knight Biggerstaff was the head of the Far Eastern studies department, Professor Knight Biggerstaff, he's still with us, a blessed gentleman. He had been in Chungking during World War II and had a very good knowledge of China in its contemporary form, and what he tried to teach us was the practicalities of US-China relations or China as it presented itself to the modern world. We were exposed to Chinese history in that context. Whereas when I got to Harvard, I found the emphasis was far more on the Chinese classics. John K. Fairbank, to the contrary notwithstanding, was the head of the program, but he was so busily engaged in being a book writer and a lecturer and what have you—remember he showed up as one of those on McCarthy's hit list, although there was no justification whatsoever for it. He was a fine gentleman, and the East Asia program in Harvard is now named after him.

Q: Was Owen Lattimore around?

HOLDRIDGE: Lattimore showed up for one lecture. And I remember that after he had given his lecture and turned around, his shirt tail was hanging out. He looked like rather sort of a nerdish figure to me. And I couldn't quite understand how this man could be such a villain.

Q: We're talking about, for the record, how Owen Lattimore became the focal point of much of McCarthyism.

HOLDRIDGE: Of course. And I looked at Owen Lattimore and thought to myself, was this man the kind of person that could be such a terrible spy? Of course, when you look

at, what's his name, Ames over in the Agency, he didn't look like the part either. Owen Lattimore did not impress me as being a man of enormous brilliance.

Q: Here you have already spent, what, almost three years on Chinese studies, two years anyway, as you sat around with your colleagues, by this time our whole China operation was shutting down, we're talking about 1950, posts were shut, I think, the post in Mukden had been...

HOLDRIDGE: Oh yes, starting with Shenyang and then going down to Beijing and Nanjing and so on. We wondered what kind of future we would have, would we ever get into China at all? And that was a big question, but nevertheless we were in the program, and we persevered. By the way, I started to say that Harvard's emphasis was on the classics. Francis Cleaves was one of our leading lights. He was known to his Chinese friends as Ke Wanshih—"ten thousand stones." He was always going after Chinese rubbings of ancient calligraphy. There was also a teacher by the name of Hightower. At Harvard, if you didn't know Legge's classics, the translations or even the originals of the classics, why, you were at something of a disadvantage. The problem with Fairbank was he tried awfully hard to make a program about China, and there were about thirty or forty people who were studying in this group...

Q: Not just Foreign Service?

HOLDRIDGE: Not just Foreign Service. We were just this small enclave. Others came in and what Fairbank tried to do was to bring representatives from various departments in to give lectures to us on their perspectives about what was going on. The problem was that none of these people could speak the same brand of the English language. I remember a social scientist would talk his social science jargon. We would have an economist who came in and talked his jargon. At one point, one of my colleagues, of Chinese origin, got up and said, is this stuff so esoteric, sir, or is it that I'm just stupid—I don't understand what you are saying. Actually, we got a good deal out of Harvard in terms of learning about

China, and I think it was useful to study Chinese and some of the classics, that was fine. But it did not give us the more practical approach which is what we got from Cornell. The one thing that I deplored, that neither one taught us sufficient spoken Chinese. I mean if you're studying the Chinese classics, it's like taking the Bible and turning it into telegraph form.

Q: I guess the problem is when you turn in over to an academic institution, for the most part, you get an academic approach. You almost have to go to a Berlitz or an equivalent.

HOLDRIDGE: That is true. And therefore I spent the next ten years or so trying to learn from experience, rather than from books. The book learning was good, no doubt about that, giving you a solid foundation in Chinist culture and political history. But what you want to do is to have some degree of contact, if you'll excuse the expression, interface with Chinese.

Q: Now you more or less completed the Harvard thing when?

HOLDRIDGE: About the end of September 1950. By this time I had married my wife and was ordered to Bangkok, Thailand, where there was a large Chinese population.

Q: So we're talking, the Korean War has started, and we were not yet at war with China.

HOLDRIDGE: No, but we were on the way to it. On the way out to Bangkok my wife and I flew—she was some months pregnant at the time—we flew by way of Hawaii and then to Japan and then to Hong Kong. In Thailand, I would be the Chinese language officer for USIS, in Bangkok. But when we got to Hong Kong, talking to the people there, the military attach#s told us that they were well aware of trains, massive movements, rail movements of Chinese troops from Lin Biao's 4th Field Army, north towards Korea. This was October. And it seemed that at almost any minute China was prepared to enter the Korean War. Of course, there was this big debate about whether Douglas MacArthur should have

crossed the 38th parallel and pushed all the way to the Yalu, and the Chinese had sent their warning to the U.S. via Pannikkar...

Q: Pannikkar being an Indian source who was not well thought of in the United States.

HOLDRIDGE: Well, the Secretary of State was John Foster Dulles, I guess, or was Dean Acheson, or was it John Foster Dulles? I guess it was still Dean Acheson. Dean Acheson just shrugged his shoulders, and of course, MacArthur completely discounted the intelligence reports coming in. His intelligence chief...

Q: He was a psychopath, is that the term?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, he was a Prussian, really.

Q: Willoughby?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, General Willoughby. Willoughby, I don't know what his German name was, but he spoke with a German accent and had a Prussian attitude and if the intelligence didn't fit the accepted picture, forget it. So Willoughby gave MacArthur a bad steer and I guess we were utterly unprepared.

Q: Before you went out, you had been in this training, did you go to Washington and talk?

HOLDRIDGE: Of course.

Q: Here you were, a newly minted China expert, what were they telling you in mid-1950?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, to tell you the truth not very much. Just go out there and do your thing. And learn from experience.

Q: I mean were they saying, was there anyone talking about that now you were up against the State Department as an institution, was anyone saying about China or whether...

HOLDRIDGE: No. It seemed pretty obvious that the next quarter of the century at least, in the foreseeable future, China was going to be run by Communists. We didn't know what that entailed. We were just keeping our fingers crossed and hoping that some way we might be able to contribute to U.S. foreign policy, of course, from our level, rather low.

Q: Were you more or less prepared to say, OK, this is how we are going to be working on the periphery of China or in Taiwan or in other places, and be monitoring China?

HOLDRIDGE: That is exactly what the philosophy was. Rather than let us be transferred entirely out of the region, whoever was in charge of the bureau at the time, or maybe somebody like Phil Sprouse, decided that people with Chinese language training would be assigned to places where they would be able to use it. In Bangkok, for instance, where I was, a very substantial proportion of the population is Chinese, of Chinese origin. Even though they don't necessarily speak Mandarin all that well, Mandarin was taught in the Chinese schools. So, I could get around with Mandarin, wherever I went. Others went to Taiwan. Arthur Rosen was sent to Taiwan when we had a very small mission there. We didn't want to interfere with any civil war, so their job was just to watch how things were going between the Kuomintang and the mainland. Some were sent to Korea, and various other places in East Asia with just a sort of watching brief.

Q: You are in Thailand, you're there, September 1950ish, what was the situation as you saw it in Thailand at this time?

HOLDRIDGE: What I saw in Thailand was tension, political tension. King Phumiphon had just recently come back from school in Switzerland, and I watched the outpouring of enormous emotion as the people welcomed back this symbol of Thai culture, history and nationalism. But the military wasn't getting along very well. The prime minister, Phibun Songgram, a military general, an army general, was not liked by the navy for reasons I haven't really gone into much. The navy waited, bided its time. Right in front of my very eyes, in June 1951, occurred what they called the “Manhattan Coup,” in which the navy

tried to overthrow the government by arresting the prime minister. This was at a formal ceremony in which we and the United States were presenting the Thai with the first tangible fruits of our economic relationship, an old US Army engineer harbor dredge from New York, the “Manhattan,” which had been towed by a Dutch tug all the way through the Panama Canal and across the Pacific to Thailand. Here it was being greeted by Buddhist priests with good fortune symbols painted on the bow, all of the diplomatic corps was there, with everybody wearing white suits. This grimy old tub—it was a coal burner—and coal dust had gotten impregnated into the decks. Anyway, it was quite a ceremony. I did not board the ship because I had been there the day before with a bunch of newspaper people, Chinese reporters. My job was working, like I said, with the Chinese, and there was a very active Chinese press in Thailand. So I had taken a bunch of reporters down there the day before, and I had seen the “Manhattan,” and I wasn't interested, but as I stood there, watching others board this ship, on my left I noticed three guys in military uniform, khaki uniform with Japanese-style steel helmets on their heads, pushing a light machine gun along the ground. I said to myself, well, this wasn't on the program yesterday, what's going on here? Those people set themselves up so they could sweep the crowd with their machine gun. Then other khaki clad, steel helmeted types came through the assembled throng with rifles at high port, locking and loading as they came through, and I said, oh-oh. And about then, a young lieutenant commander in the navy come up with a 45 pistol and said, “ladies and gentleman, I am very sorry, but I must arrest the prime minister.” And he went aboard the “Manhattan” and grabbed the prime minister and arrested him. After that, they walked along the edge of the Mena Chao Phya River about five feet away from me. I had by this time stepped very quietly back behind the light machine gun, so I wasn't going to be in any line of fire. I could have pushed both of these guys in, in fact, including the police bodyguard for the prime minister, a police colonel, I could have pushed all three into the river. But somehow the thought didn't occur to me. Then, the Indonesian military attach# said that he had seen this sort of thing before, we better get out of here before somebody starts shooting, and we all bugged out.

Q: How did that come out?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, what happened was that for a period of around three days, the city of Bangkok was under siege. The army set roadblocks near the main center of navy power which was the naval communications center on Telegraph Road, straight down the street from the British embassy. The British embassy was at one end and the navy communications center at the other. Then the army came along and surrounded the navy communications center. The navy was trying to whip up enthusiasm among the people to overthrow this corrupt Phibun regime, which it didn't like much. Meanwhile, the army brought in several divisions of troops from up country. The air force joined the army and came over and did some bombing. From my own house I watched them bomb, they had T-6 trainers, which they had fitted with bomb racks but they never came particularly low. They dive-bombed from about 2000 feet. You could see the bombs drop, and then, boom, up would come pieces of palm tree. But after about three days of this, and an artillery barrage right across the klong, or canal, from me, it became obvious to the navy that their cause was lost. The rebels threw off their uniforms, and in their underwear, I guess, melted into the surrounding crowd and the coup was over.

Q: Who was the ambassador at that time?

HOLDRIDGE: Edwin Stanton. A gentleman of the old school.

Q: Was it a small embassy?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, there were 26 Americans in the embassy.

Q: All of sudden he had this newly minted Chinese language officer, I take it you were probably the first person there doing that, weren't you?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, I was with USIS, as I said. My big job was, I saw it as my cause, to set up Chinese reading rooms in downtown Bangkok or down in Hat Yai, which is another center of Chinese influence, way down in the south.

Q: This is where later you had the insurrection...

HOLDRIDGE: Well, I was close to, but that's one reason we thought it was necessary to set up a consulate at Songkhla, now just being closed thanks to Newt Gingrich and company. Anyway, the idea was that it was down close enough to where the CTs, or communist terrorists, were operating so that we could keep something of a watch on them.

Q: CT being?

HOLDRIDGE: Communist terrorists.

Q: These were Thai terrorists as opposed to Malaysian terrorists?

HOLDRIDGE: No, actually they were of Chinese origin, most of them, anyway. But they had come across the border into sanctuaries where the British couldn't get at them. The Thai government was impotent. Either it didn't care to tangle with them or probably even profited to certain extent. It reminds of the situation along the Thai-Cambodian border. For several years, where the military on the Thai side benefitted from the presence of the Khmer Rouge on the other side.

Q: We're talking about the in the 70s and 80s.

HOLDRIDGE: That's correct.

Q: Did the ambassador welcome what we were doing there or was he paying particular attention to this?

HOLDRIDGE: He welcomed this I think. No problem there. The difficulty for Ed Stanton, physically, was that he was not a well man. He had hypertension, and in those days, hypertension was not something that you could cure by taking an inderal pill. He was gone for good sections of the time. His DCM., William T. Turner, often ran the embassy. But they were both diplomats of the old pre-W.W.II school. Ed Stanton had a certain amount of confidence in me because in early 1951, I guess I was the most junior, hence the most expendable member of the embassy; anyway. he sent me up to the northeast. Nobody had been from the embassy up to northeast Thailand, God, forever, I don't know. So the first thing I knew, they bought me a railroad ticket and stuck me on a train for Korat, which, you may recall, was one of the major airbases in the Vietnamese War. Well, from Korat I was supposed to make my way all the way to Udorn, which was close to the Mekong River. I thought to myself, here I was in a compartment all by myself, what in God's name am I going to do? I didn't speak any Thai, but I guessed they figured I could somehow make my way, one way or another. To my great pleasure, and relief, in the compartment next to me was a man named Jim Thompson. And with Jim was a young man who he had stolen from Harvard, a linguistic scholar, God—how linguistic scholars keep turning up. The young man had said to Jim at a cocktail party, well, he said, he was awfully tired of studying linguistics, he ought to get out and get some practical experience. Jim said, I have just the place for you, come with me and I will put you in charge of a silkworm plantation on the Mekong River, Rod Hemphill was this guy's name. And I haven't heard or seen anything of him since. But there were Jim and Rod Hemphill in the next compartment, and we got to talking, and Jim said, “Why don't you join forces with me?” Jim spoke a few words of Thai and some execrable but understandable French. He had been up there reinvigorating the Thai silk industry, and had connections. So I tagged along with him, for the couple of weeks we were up there. And I made my way back to my very pregnant wife, about to give birth to our first child, our daughter, and wrote a report which covered rather a wide swath of territory.

Q: Well, Jim Thompson was a figure to conjure with in Thai things, particularly regarding the silk industry, and his mysterious disappearance...

HOLDRIDGE: Well, I can tell you a little about that.

Q: Well, but that wasn't at this time.

HOLDRIDGE: No, that came later. He was with his girlfriend down in Malaysia ("Malaya" at that time) with some friends of ours, actually, T.G. and Helen Ling, who were refugees from China. T.G., Chinese; Helen, American. She was a Moravian Christian, from New Jersey. But anyway, they had met. She was running an antique store in Shanghai when the Communists came. They got out in time, and moved down into Thailand and set up shop there. Later, they moved to Singapore, and they had a house up in Cameron Highlands. Jim was well-known to them, and came up and visited them on this occasion and vanished. They had been up to a picnic on top of a nearby mountain. Afterwards, it was the custom to have a siesta after all those pink gins or gimlets which were served at such picnics. But Jim didn't take a siesta. Jim paced back and forth, looking at his watch as if he had an appointment, and eventually, he went out the front door, and no one ever saw him again. That is the mysterious thing. My only conclusion is that he was so well ahead of everybody else in the Thai silk industry that his competitors were very unhappy. In fact, the wife of the Thai police chief, General Phao, was the proprietress of Star of Siam, which has since become quite big. And I figure that Jim had already got rather threatening notes and been harassed by various chauvinists in Thailand, even though he willed all his antique collection, a glorious collection of Thai art, to the Thai government, but they decided they had to get rid of him. They sent down somebody who probably coshed him on the back of the head and put him in the back of the trunk of a car and drove off. Later, the British brought in the SAS, brought in tracker dogs, brought in the Orang Asli, the aborigines, to look around, and never found a trace. So I concluded the disappearance was due to commercial rivalry.

Q: After looking at northeast Thailand, did you come up with any conclusion about the area? Was it threatened by the Chinese or the Vietnamese?

HOLDRIDGE: No threat. The only problem was that northeast Thailand is traditionally, and still to this day, the least economically developed section of Thailand. If you go straight north from Bangkok on towards Chiang Mai, it is not bad. But the northeast has always been neglected, and you got people there who are really more Lao than Thai. There are linguistic problems. They aren't exactly racially similar, although they are kin, and the Thai government, for a lack of resources perhaps, perhaps a lack of determination, hadn't done much for the people of northeast Thailand. In fact, there had been, during the French period, some effort on the part of France, to annex that section of Thailand to French Indochina. That had been defeated under circumstances I can't quite recall. So there was a lot of resentment on the part of the people of the northeast towards the government in Bangkok. But not of a kind which would lead to a revolutionary nature. Now to be sure, when the Thai Communist party finally became militant enough to try to organize resistance or subversion against the Thai government, they went to the northeast. But the problem there was that the local Thai, Thai-Lao, weren't all that enthusiastic about it all, and the hard core of the resistance came from Chinese groups recruited in Bangkok. And these city boys didn't really like being up in the sticks, and when you were in the northeast in those days, you were really up in the sticks. After a while, the whole thing just kind of petered out.

Q: What were you finding, we're talking about the early '50s, what was the Chinese community like, and what was our thrust, what were we trying to do?

HOLDRIDGE: Our thrust was anti-Communist. Yes, we were trying to catch these people who were not particularly Communist inclined anyway. There may have been some young students in the various middle schools who were pro-Communist because they saw the Communists as people who would give China stature and dignity, a place in the world. And of course, the Chinese were always a people apart from Thailand, despite

the fact that they all were Buddhists—Theravadi and Mahayana—Buddhists, there had been considerable inter-marriage. Nevertheless, the Chinese were always suspect. I guess in the middle schools, this was one of the problems among the younger men, but basically, my job was to build up a sentiment against the Chinese Communists. I remember producing a comic book, “Sun Zhungshan Zai Na-li” or “Where is Sun Yat-sen?” and it was all about how Sun Yat-sen had been such a great hero to the Chinese people, the father of the revolution and so on, and yet had disappeared, and in his place come these people who are oppressive and not representative of true Chinese culture. And we got quite a bit of circulation of that little comic book. It got around quite a bit.

Q: Well then, were there any other developments we should cover while.., you were there 1950 to when?

HOLDRIDGE: Until '53, February. Anyway, the one thing I can say is we got the Thai thoroughly committed on our side. The Thai were either talked into or volunteered into sending a battalion of troops to Korea. And I watched the troops depart, and I watched them come back as heroes. And we had a very big mission. When we started out, I said, we had 26 people. By the time I left, the diplomatic list of Americans was about four pages long. And an international school was set up, which was really an American school; my wife was the secretary of it, and the American presence was very pervasive indeed.

Q: Was this a problem?

HOLDRIDGE: The Thai didn't seem to object. If they did, they didn't show it. I guess they were worried indeed about the spread of Chinese Communism. It's a fact of life still in Southeast Asia today. If I may jump ahead a little bit, I was talking to the Indonesian ambassador just a few weeks ago, about Vietnam, and how come Vietnam is being asked into ASEAN, which will occur at the end of this month at the meeting of Brunei. Well, one of the reasons they said is, now that Vietnam is acting like a decent country in Southeast Asia, more or less, they are overlooking a lot of little problems. But here is the Benny

Murdani school of thought. Benny, the commander of the Indonesian armed forces when I was there as ambassador, used to tell me the reason. He used to advocate, “let's give the Vietnamese what they want. If they want Cambodia, let them have it, who the hell wants Cambodia? But once they get what they want, they will be good neighbors. They will act as a buffer between China and Southeast Asia, a reliable buffer.” And that is practically what, in this day and age, my friend, Arifin Siregar, the ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia, told me about four weeks ago.

Q: The politics of Southeast Asia are, of course, China.

HOLDRIDGE: Yes.

Q: Did you find, as a Chinese officer at the embassy, the other officers dealing with the Thais understood the role of the Chinese community or was this a problem?

HOLDRIDGE: It was a problem, I think, that the political section of the embassy, the three man political section, I'm trying to recall names, Rolland Bushner, Bob Anderson (later Ambassador to Mexico), and Norman Hannah, who later was consul general in Melbourne. Anyway, they were concentrating on Thai politics, and I'm going back to that episode of the “Manhattan” coup. I recall these three guys down there on the dock when the navy marines infiltrated and set up their firepower, these three went into this panic, saying, “Oh no, it can't happen, it can't happen, it can't happen.” I found out a few days later what was wrong with them, I thought they were rather overreacting. When I got back to my desk and opened the safes, which had been abandoned for three days, the first thing I saw was the political report for the month of June, they had sent it in a little bit earlier. The last words said, it does not appear likely that there will be a coup at this time.

Q: Well then, you left Bangkok in 1953 and you went to Hong Kong.

HOLDRIDGE: Right, After a spell in Washington, almost six months of what they call the mid-career, I thought I was hardly mid-career. I had been promoted to FSO-5 from FSO-6.

Q: Six was the lowest grade.

HOLDRIDGE: Six was the lowest grade in those days. But anyway, I spent six months here at the Foreign Service Institute and then was sent to Hong Kong.

Q: So you were in Hong Kong again from '53 until...?

HOLDRIDGE: '53 to '56.

Q; From '53 to '56. What was your job in Hong Kong?

HOLDRIDGE: My job in Hong Kong: two things. First of all, talking to, interrogating really, people from the China mainland, Westerners who were being allowed to leave, and asking them about conditions in the community they were leaving behind. This involved a lot of contact with missionaries. Missionaries were coming out fast and furiously.

Q: Basically foreign missionaries.

HOLDRIDGE: Foreign missionaries, yes.

Going back to your question on Bangkok, Norman Hannah was head of the political section in Bangkok. Anyway, my job in Hong Kong was interrogating. I got to know all these various Catholic orders quite well—Dominicans, Franciscans, you name them and they had them. And I talked to them all, as much as we could arrange. We had a good working arrangement with the Brits, that they would talk to various non-missionary people entering Hong Kong, businessmen perhaps, more than we did, and we used to have a healthy exchange to find out what was going on. The British had as much an interest in what was going on in China as we did. Perhaps more, because of the possible threat to Hong Kong. So we collaborated quite closely with British military intelligence.

Q: You were as close to the beginning, it's already started but it still was not fully developed, what became really a very famous operation, which was the China watchers in Hong Kong.

HOLDRIDGE: Oh yes, I was one of them.

Q: Now, we're talking about your period of time, '53 to '56, can you tell how it operated and how effective you think it was?

HOLDRIDGE: First of all, we talked to people, like I said. We tried to debrief as many people who were knowledgeable to some extent in what was going on around them at the time they departed China. How people thought in China about the Chinese Communists, what was happening in the community, the disruptions, as they occurred, of the way of life, and so on. Another thing we did, and this later on was one of my jobs too, we read the China mainland press. And I became, in addition to other duties, the head of the press monitoring unit, which was set up in a different part of the Consulate. It was set in the old British-American Tobacco Company, on the Wanchai waterfront, which is now, of course, moved out four more blocks farther out into the harbor. Be that as it may, I had a group of about fifteen or twenty Chinese working for me, most of whom had been in the US government service on the mainland and had made their way down. Very well educated, spoke Mandarin Chinese, and spoke English. They knew a lot about China, and they were able to interpret events. In fact, we had one man, T.S. Sun, who later became, on my second tour in Hong Kong, a political analyst. He was regarded as being really authoritative on interpreting the meaning of various developments. So combining analysis of the press, as much as we could get, combining the debriefings of people that were coming out, we thought we could get a pretty good feel of what was going on in China.

Q: How about the FBIS, the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, which monitors straight broadcasts? Was that in place at the time?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes it was. And that was part of it, too. They got the formal Chinese press releases over the broadcast, and here is an example of how we were able to work out...I take a certain amount of perverse pleasure in this...that in 1956, at the time of the establishment of the “Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet,” and through comparison of the English and Chinese versions of the Dalai Lama's speech, obtain an explanation for the Dalai Lama's flight to India a few years later. The uprising of the Khambas, which brought about the Dalai Lama's flight to India, took place in 1959. However, in 1956 the Dalai Lama was still very much a force in Tibet, although the Chinese thought their control of that area was such that they could set up what was known as the Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet. With Chinese, of course, in all the key spots a few guys, like the Panchen Lama also in it. The Dalai was still there, so he was playing along. And I can recall comparing the New China News Agency account of the speech given by the Dalai Lama, translated into English, for our benefit, by our Chinese friends, and what we got out of the China mainland press on the same speech translated by us. There were very significant differences between what the Dalai Lama was said to have said in English and what was not reported in the English version, compared to what he said in full. And one of the things that struck me was, he said, our Chinese compatriots, while they have been here, have been building many roads to improve the economy of our country and we must thank our Chinese compatriots for their contributions, period. Well, in the Chinese version he went on to say, at the same time, however, in the course of this road construction, many of our countrymen, fellow countrymen, have given up their valuable lives, and we send our sincerest condolences to the families of these heroes. You can compare these versions and draw your own conclusions. At the end of my report on this event, I said that it didn't look to me as if the Chinese were all that popular, and if they thought they had established full control over Tibet, they were whistling in the dark. This particular report of mine got into the hands of the British. Later on I saw a comment of some analyst in London, at the JIC, the Joint Intelligence Committee. He said, this man is way off base when he says they haven't got control of the place. At about the time, later on, when the Dalai Lama actually fled, I was

back in Washington, and it was obvious that the Khamba tribesmen, and there were a hell of a lot of Tibetans along with them, had no use for the Chinese and rose up in rebellion, I had my own little moment of quiet satisfaction.

Q: In retrospect, the methods that were being used there, do you feel that, during the '56 to '56 period, you were getting an accurate picture of what was going on in China?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, I did, because if you keep on reading the Chinese press, day after day, especially in my capacity as head of the press monitoring unit, as I did—I thought it was important that I knew the cast of characters, who they were, what they stood for, where they came from, what they were doing, all about them that I could. If you read the editorial flow of the People's Daily, you begin to understand some of the lines of thinking and policies of the time. If something came up that was different, it immediately rang bells. You could see that something was going on there. Then, you would start to analyze it. For example, in this respect, shortly before I left to go to Singapore, as it happened, I noticed that they were celebrating the anniversary of the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party, which was July, 1921, when it was established. In reading through some of the statements of the time, there were remarks in the editorialization about many of the cadres having lost faith in the leadership of the party. “This will have to be rectified, we have to bring these people around.” You could see that inside China there were severe problems.

Q: This was before The Great Leap Forward, that come later. How was the end of the Korean War, which was basically a stalemate, how did this play in China? North Korea was still there, but they certainly hadn't taken over...

HOLDRIDGE: Well, the Chinese were, of course, cock-a-hoop, if you will. They had defeated the Americans, or so it would seem. It was a stalemate. But just holding back American power was sufficient for them. It gave them an enormous shot in the arm, psychologically speaking. This was reflected in the Chinese mainland press.

Q: Who was the Consul General in Hong Kong during this time?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, let's see now. A good part of the time it was Everett Drumright.

Q: He was well-known for being very conservative and certainly no friend of the Communists. Did his attitude penetrate the reporting unit or not?

HOLDRIDGE: Nope. To Everett Drumright's eternal glory, he did not challenge conclusions, he did not rewrite despatches or airgrams or whatever it was we were using at the time, or cables. He was very solid in that respect. We said what we thought, and he may have added his own comments somewhere else, but at the same time, he did not move in the direction of trying to influence our reporting in any way. The same is true, incidentally, of another man I knew fairly well, Carl Rankin, who was ambassador to Taiwan, and, in fact, Everett Drumright replaced him on Taiwan. And Rankin used to add his own observations at the end of a report that may have been more favorable toward the Kuomintang, but he never changed the basic report.

Q: Within the Chinese watching community of which you were a part, what was the attitude towards the Kuomintang, Chiang Kai-shek and all, because we're talking about the McCarthy era, I also want to mention the McCarthy era, but let's just talk about the attitude towards Kuomintang at this point.

HOLDRIDGE: Well, we all thought of it, in Hong Kong, as sort of an annoyance, frankly. What the Kuomintang was trying to do, was to organize resistance groups to infiltrate back across the Chinese border, and the British hated that and kept on picking these guys up, rolling them up, and I don't know what happened to them. I suppose there are still some of them out there in jail, in Stanley prison. They'll be there until the Communists come. We didn't have a great deal of respect for the Kuomintang because they seemed to be so ineffective and inefficient. Frankly, we stayed away from them like the plague because we didn't want to get mixed up in the minds of our Chinese friends with the Kuomintang.

Q: Losers?

HOLDRIDGE: The losers.

Q: Let's come to the very big topic of, did that belong to the generation of China experts that got hit by McCarthyism? You were reporting on China, and part of the thing of McCarthyism was one should think positively about the forces of the Kuomintang and China. I would think seeing what was happening to some of your older colleagues coming out of the China thing would have had an effect on how you felt.

HOLDRIDGE: All I can say is, personally, it never affected my own reporting. As a matter of fact, here we were trying to pick holes in what was going on in China and trying to show that the Communists were not the great agrarian reformers that they depicted themselves as, and we were pretty well on a parallel track on what McCarthy was doing, except we were calling our shots as we saw them, and we were in no way pro-Kuomintang. You know, I have the greatest amount of sympathy for people like John Service, who I ran into later in Beijing with Henry Kissinger on his second trip. Anyway, we had a tremendous amount of sympathy for those, and I had very little sympathy for Foster Dulles. When he came along as Secretary of State it happened that I was back in Washington. This was in 1953 before I went to Hong Kong. I attended the luncheon which the Foreign Service Association held for him as the new Secretary of State and heard him say, “some of you are loyal.” In other words, he had a deep-seated suspicion [of the career Foreign Service].

Q: You know he used the phrase that ran through the corridor of the State Department, positive loyalty.

HOLDRIDGE: Sounds right.

Q: It was a very off-putting thing.

HOLDRIDGE: Off-putting thing, and we cringed under this, but, by golly, I don't believe I ever let any of this nonsense intrude into what I considered to be the conclusions which I drew. Now the conclusions which I drew would not be rejected or incompatible with what Dulles was thinking about the terror of the Communists. Later on, when I was back on the China desk, and I heard Walter Robertson saying innumerable times, that the Communists had killed 20 million Chinese in the course of taking over the mainland, I also thought that, well, it seemed a bit extreme. I never agreed with taking that kind of a complete, biased approach.

Q: Was McCarthyism a subject of conversation among the China people? Because later this became quite a theme, you might say from the liberal community, but I was just wondering, at the professional level, working in it day by day, were you really thinking about this?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, the only thing we were really upset about was the fact that people, our colleagues who had served well and ably, were being castigated. Even John Fairbank had been accused of being one of these pro-Communist types. Owen Lattimore, of course, and the members of the Foreign Service. Ed Rice who was the Consul General my second time around in Hong Kong, was one of those who came awfully close, I'm sure he had his tail feathers singed. But Ed, a man of great integrity, if not a vast amount of imagination, always stuck to his guns. I think we all went about doing our business the best way we could, deploring the horrible things that had happened to guys like John Service.

Q: But it was not a thing like, boy you better watch your back all the time.

HOLDRIDGE: I think there was enough sense of duty on the part of the Foreign Service Officers assigned to the consulate general in Hong Kong that we continued to call our shots like we saw them. But we did not tailor the end product in order to please the people back in Washington.

Q: Did you get any reflection, were you monitoring the American press at all to find out how China was being played in the American press?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, we, of course, got the Herald Tribune. That was a very great asset to us. And the Asian Wall Street Journal and the Far Eastern Economic Review covered Washington and how it was covering China. So we were aware of what was going on, and we did not always agree. But you mentioned, of course, the Great Leap Forward. That was a disaster for China.

Q: When did that start about?

HOLDRIDGE: I believe it was 1958.

Q: Well, this was after you left Hong Kong. I was just thinking, we might stop here, at this point. In 1956 you left Hong Kong and went to Singapore, is that right?

HOLDRIDGE: That's right. I was there for three years.

Q: Today is the 10th of August, 1995.

All right, we're 1956. We're in Singapore.

HOLDRIDGE: At this rate we might finish up by Christmas.

Q: Oh, I don't know about that. It was a direct transfer to Singapore.

HOLDRIDGE: It was a direct transfer to Singapore, where I became the political officer at the then Consulate General, which was a supervisory Consulate General over another Consulate General in Kuala Lumpur. This was well before independence. Well, not well before, a year before, Malaya became independent.

Q: Could you describe what was the situation, what was it called, the colony of...

HOLDRIDGE: The Crown Colony of Singapore. It was chaotic. At that time, there was pressure on the one hand towards independence from the British, to get rid of colonial rule, and on the other, to press for Chinese culture and education to be recognized at the same level as English, Malay or Tamil in the educational stream. The British Colony authorities, headed by Governor Brown, who was also governor, at one time, of Hong Kong, I had known him in Hong Kong, was beset on all sides. There were strikes going on, the Harbor Board, what did they call it, it's still in existence, the government organization that runs the port—the Singapore Port Authority—and the people were organized under a labor leader named Jamit Sing, who seemed to a very fiery individual, probably a supporter of Bhose..

Q: The Indian ally to the Japanese. And the Germans, too.

HOLDRIDGE: Anyway, Jamit Sing had the people in the port on strike a good part of the time, and we hadn't been there, my wife and I, more than a month, I think it was even less than that, when riots were generated among the fanatics of the Chinese communities in support of Chinese culture and education. Not too far from where we lived was a Chinese high school, the Chinese High School, it was called. I could hear, one night when we had a number of people in for dinner, all of this shouting and screaming, it was off in the distance, but it was quite audible. The kids had gotten together and were taunting the British authorities, and what have you, and the next thing you know, you had this mixture of the labor groups and Chinese student groups trying to, in effect, overthrow the colonial government in Singapore, which was not about to tolerate any such effort. Remember, this is a time when the terrorism was still going on in Malaya.

Q: The insurgency was it called? What was it called?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, the British always tried to call their opponents “Communist terrorists,” that is, the CTs under Chin Peng. They had anti-CT battalions all over the place. The minute that this trouble began to break out in Singapore,—we could see it building up by

the way, in the days before this riot took place, Martha and I went down a couple of times to a motion picture, down in the center of the old Singapore, (the center of gravity has moved elsewhere now). But anyway, we went down there and the riot squad would be out. Here comes a phalanx of blue clad policemen, some Indians, some Malays, some Chinese. The first ranks, would be all wearing steel helmets, and armed with lahtis and shields. But the last three ranks were armed with Sten guns. And behind all came specially built armored cars that had a large kind of a tower or turret, not rotating, but people could stand up there with a Bren gun and shoot over the heads of the riot squad members up ahead. These units were marching around, putting on a display of force. If this is what you want, they said, well, here we are, we're going to give it to you. One day I tried to get down to the office, and I found it was impossible. This was the day after we had had the party, and our guests all went home early. All of Bukit Timah Road, the main road between downtown Singapore and the causeway over to Johor Baharu, was just absolutely blocked with people swarming around, overturning cars, throwing rocks and whatever, to which the British responded by bringing in a number of their battalions from Malaya. They were strung out like beads on a string all the way on the main highway, up as far as Ipoh. They brought these battalions in, and they mobilized every single British soldier they could find. I remember driving along, we were out on...

Mrs. HOLDRIDGE: Holland Road.

HOLDRIDGE: Holland Road. We were out there and I remember passing a rather bewildered and bespectacled young British soldier, who I determined was from the Royal Army Pay Corps, and who didn't join the British Army to carry a rifle, but there, by golly, he was and looking rather surprised. Everybody was thrown into it, and in about three days everything had quieted down. This is the time when Lee Kuan Yew and the People's Action Party were very prominent. The chief minister was Lim Yew Hock, who was pro-British, I guess you can say, he was regarded as an instrument by the rebels, of the British. You know, somebody who was really “not one of us.” He was not a good Singaporean because he played along with the Brits. And I saw a lot of him. He used to

call me up in the evenings and say, I'm going to be meeting such and such a trade union group or the Hawkers Association, at such and such a Chinese restaurant, how about joining me? And of course this is almost a command, and I said, “of course.” And the same time I used to see a lot of Lee Kuan Yew. Lee was one of the two members of the PAP, the People's Action Party, which now, of course, is the government party in Singapore, who wasn't languishing in Changi jail. And Lee Kuan Yew, if I didn't mention this last time, he used to come around and see me, after eight o'clock at night...

Q: We had just started on Singapore so you wouldn't have mentioned it.

HOLDRIDGE: Well, all right. Well, Lee Kuan Yew wanted very much to keep in touch with the American Consulate General. Now, he had some grudges against the Americans. His wife, on one occasion, they thought had cancer, and he wanted very much to get her into Bethesda or Walter Reed, and somehow he got turned down by the US authorities, stupidly, and that gave him a grudge against Americans. On the other hand, he saw the merits of having a degree of American understanding of what he was trying to do. And he swore up and down to me, and also, if I may mention, a certain other organization. Well, the station chief lived next door. The two of us would come in, and Lee Kuan Yew would join us, and then we would discuss what Lee was going to do. And he swore up and down that he was going to get rid of the Communists in the PAP. I had my doubts. I had been told that Lee Kuan Yew was not, what you would call, the bravest of individuals. He might chicken out if the going got really tough, which it didn't. He was really plugging away, and he would make brilliant speeches in the Singapore National Assembly, which I would attended all the time, regularly. Another person on the scene was one David Marshall, who had been formerly the Chief Minister of Singapore. This is before Lim Yew Hock came along and the election threw out Marshall and brought in, what do they call it, the Lib Socs (Liberal Social Party). At any rate, Marshall and..., Lee Kuan Yew tended to dominate the proceedings, both brilliant orators. Lee Kuan Yew, I think, did very well at Cambridge on the equivalent of the Oxford debating team.

Q: Here was Lee Kuan Yew, who was obviously primed for something, as you are getting close to this. You are a political reporter, but also there is a station chief looking at it. Was there a difference in evaluation between, you might say, the station chief and you about Lee Kuan Yew or...

HOLDRIDGE: No, there wasn't, although as a matter of fact, it may have been the station chief who fed me the information about Lee Kuan Yew tending to chicken out when the going got rough. Anyway, we were good friends. We saw a good deal of each other. On matters of Singapore, I didn't inquire into some of the other responsibilities of what we called CAS.

Q: CAS being?

HOLDRIDGE: Controlled American Source. At any rate, I didn't inquire too deeply into what he was doing, but when it came to Singapore politics, I think we exchanged freely, and I don't think there was too much holding back. He's still a good friend. He's retired over there in McLean.

Q: What, let's go back a little, who was Consul General at the time?

HOLDRIDGE: Durbrow, Elbridge Durbrow.

Q: Now, Durbrow was an old China hand.

HOLDRIDGE: No, not really, he was an Eastern European hand. One of his favorite stories was when he was, I think, political officer, or something like that, in Romania, and the people who built, oh gosh, not Lockheed, (it was Northrop, I believe) were trying to sell airplanes to the Romanian Air Force. They said, anybody could fly it, why don't you, Durbrow. We'll fix it up so you take a few lessons, and you can go off and solo, which he did. And he had been in Moscow, where he was a drummer in a little group called the Diplomatic Notes. Anyway, Durbrow was the Consul General and he was really a lively

fellow. We had only one little problem, and that was Durbrow's wife Emily, who was not exactly attuned to the Foreign Service. When I first got there, I replaced a fellow, Andy Anderson, who later tragically died of some mysterious disease. Andy's wife and Emily Durbrow hated each others' guts. This is one of these in-grown Foreign Service situations.

Q: Oh yeah, but it could be terribly important. I mean in a relatively small post. Did Durbrow, coming from Eastern Europe, and probably with a very jaundice view towards communism, did he tend to see communism everywhere, or was he rather dispassionate about how he observed the situation?

HOLDRIDGE: No, actually his job, as he saw it, was reporting the facts, and we depended very heavily, as a matter of fact, on our contacts with the British. Remember at that time, there was a super envoy of the British, The High Commissioner for Southeast Asia, located in a place called Phoenix Park, not too far from where we lived. Sir Robert Scott was the High Commissioner, and we had a lot of contacts with the British High Commission, exchanged information with them, and had a lot of useful reporting that came from British sources. Now, of course, we did not have the resources that the British did. Remember, they had their people scattered all through Malaya. I deliberately say Malaya, because Malaysia did not come into existence until 1965. That's when Singapore gained independence, it was in 1962 I believe, that Malaysia was formed with Singapore as a part. The British thought that they were on their way out. They were smart enough to read the handwriting on the wall and they wanted to leave the region in as much of a tidy situation as possible. And so they worked hard to restore order to promote people in the government who would be there after them and would be capable of running the show. They had a few rough shocks though, there was one little experiment, an election that took place about early 1958 and that was when election for the City Council of Singapore was made a free election. The Communists took over. A fellow by the name of Ong Eng Guan was elected mayor. Ong as mayor then turned the whole City Council into a vehicle for

spreading the [Communist] faith. After a certain decent interval of time, the whole thing was scrapped by the British.

Q: How did you operate? You were the only political officer.

HOLDRIDGE: Well I had two assistants. One was a genuine assistant, Paul Moy, a Chinese American from California, and the other was a representative of that other organization who now and again did a little reporting for me. I just tried ideas about how political officers should operate. What I did, I tried to call on everybody I possibly could to get to know. This meant members of the Foreign Consular Corps, it meant members of the government, it meant leading businessmen in Singapore—we still have friends to this day left over from that era. We stop and see them in Singapore when we are out in that part of the world. You pick up a little bit here and a little bit there. Of course you read the newspapers. Getting in touch with the press was one of the important features of the job, too.

Q: How was the press at that time? Some presses are so venial that they are opened to any bidder, others are completely under the rule of a party, while others are much more free wheeling.

HOLDRIDGE: Well they were pretty much under the thumb of the British government. If they got out of line, some people would end up in Changi jail. The British were quite determined that they were not going to have their whole history trashed before their very eyes. They had no compunction about using force.

Q: When did the British let go? Was this one of these planned things - as of a certain date we'll do this - how did it happened?.

HOLDRIDGE: I think it was forced by events in Malaya, with Tunku Abdul Rahman pressing for independence and the British deciding, along about 1962, that the CTs were pretty well under control. There had been some episodes when we were there in 1956-58

right across the Straits of Johore where some of the “new towns” had been attacked and people were killed. But by 1962, it [the emergency] was pretty well over and done with, at least as far a Singapore was concerned. Let us look at Malaya. By 1957 the British figured the situation was okay, they could keep their troops there as long it was necessary but they would turnover the government to a locally elected popular party, which happened to be the UMNO, the United Malays National Organization, headed by Tunku Abdul Rahman. Of course, there was also the MCA (Malayan Chinese Association) and there was an Indian party, the Indian National Congress, both of which were allied with the UMNO. The three groups were working together cooperatively, and were able to take over the government. The British still had the special branch. They still had their troops there. Instead of having a High Commissioner in that part of the world, they had somebody who lived in Johore in one of the Sultan of Johore's palaces over there. And the British influence was there, but it was behind the scenes. It wasn't on the front burner, but it was kept quietly in the back. So in August 1957 Malaya became independent but with a remarkable lack of enthusiasm. I was watching this on television and watched the flag being hauled down, the British flag, and the Malayan flag being hauled up, and the people just kind of stood there, they did not understand the nature of the change really. And of course then you are getting into all sorts of politics in Malaya with the Sultans, e.g. Pahang, and Malacca, and all the rest. But at any rate, it seemed to work. But the British were still left with the Crown Colony of Singapore, about what to do with it. And this is where Malaysia came along. The problem being, if you added the population of Singapore, roughly 2-1/2 million people, of which 75 or more percent happen to be Chinese, to the population of Malaya in which (I had one Cabinet Minister under Lim Yew Hock tell me) that there were actually more Chinese in Malaya then there were Malays. The Chinese did not have as big families, but they believed in penicillin rather than going to a bomah, or native healer. So the Chinese survival rate was greater. Therefore, if you added the Chinese in Singapore to the Chinese in Malaya, then there would be a preponderance of Chinese, and this would be absolutely unacceptable both to the British and to the Malays. You would have trouble, and there had been riots, very serious ones before I got there.

One of these got David Marshall kicked out because, well, I won't go into details. It was complicated. The way the British resolved this, they decided they would give up their colonies on Borneo, or Kalimantan and merge everything, Sarawak, British North Borneo, Labuan, all into a greater organization to be known as Malaysia. And if you threw in the Kadazans and the people from North Borneo, you did not have a Chinese majority. You had a packet full of troubles anyway, trying to get all these various racial groups to work together, but at any rate, the British went ahead and that's why Singapore for a period became a part of Malaysia.

Q: This is during your time?

HOLDRIDGE: No, this was afterwards.

Q: While you were in Singapore, what was the feeling by you and maybe the other officers looking at this conglomerate of states, what were you reporting?

HOLDRIDGE: What we were reporting was the number of ties that linked Singapore to Malaya. The reason being so many of the people in Singapore had relatives in Malaya, and Malaya at that time was not well developed in terms of its export potential, that is, its port. There was one port, Port Swettenham, that was able to hold only five ocean going ships at a time. Johor Baharu had not been developed. Singapore had to remain the entrepot. There was a little bit of exporting from the Island of Penang which was, incidentally, almost entirely Chinese. That was the one Chinese-run state. Actually, Malacca had a predominantly Chinese population, but was run by a Malay as a governor. Penang was run by a Chinese governor.

Okay, well the Malays were not shopkeepers, Islam has certain provisions in it which inhibit the development of business interests by “Bumiputra,” the “Sons of the Soil,” and the Chinese were the shopkeepers in both Malaya and in Singapore, and Singapore was also the entrepot, the banking center and so on. So there was ill feeling in that regard, but still they had to live with each other. The rubber, the tea, the tin, whatever Malaya had to

export, by and large had to go through Singapore because of the lack of alternatives, and so they managed to get along and then later on the British came up with this improvisation of Malaysia.

Q: We are still talking about the reign of Walter Robertson in and East Asia Bureau, and the Eisenhower Administration, it seems from what you are saying that the Chinese in Singapore and Malaysia were different breed of cat than the Chinese who were on Taiwan. Were we trying to bring them together or not?

HOLDRIDGE: No, as a matter of fact I rarely saw anybody who claimed to be a Nationalist Chinese, a member of the Kuomintang, or whatever, we stayed away from these. This was a period when we were being very circumspect about the whole question of China vs. Taiwan. I touch on that in my book, that Alex Johnson was in Geneva talking weekly at that time with Wang Bing Nan about resolving the differences between the two countries by peaceable means. Anyway, we really didn't figure that that was an element we wanted to get involved with, and so we stayed out of it.

Q: Did you get Congressional visits, or that sort of thing that made any waves or anything?

HOLDRIDGE: We didn't get too many. One time the Chairman of the Republican National Committee, the senior Senator from Pennsylvania, Hugh Scott, came to Singapore. He was a China expert, a great collector of Chinese art, and I recall on the one occasion that he came to town, he went to a shop run by a friend of ours and saw a beautiful rose quartz carved Guanyin. At this time we had the Certificate of Origin policy in full blast (all Chinese-style art purchases had to have a Certificate of Origin declaring that the item or items in question had not originated in Communist China.) but he had us buy it and ship by US Government aircraft back to the United States so it would not get caught by customs. This remains in my mind about the ethics of the Congress at that time, as according to the law, you weren't allowed to buy products from mainland China. So I say a whole

generation of American Foreign Services Officers labored to keep items of Chinese origin out of the US. You had to have a Certificate of Origin.

Q: Are there any other things you think I should touch on about your time in Singapore '56-'58 period?

HOLDRIDGE: All I can say was that we can see at about the time I left, the pressures for a local election for internal self-government were building up, and Lee Kuan Yew and the People's Action Party were pitted against David Marshall on something called the Worker's Party. Marshall, who I never thought was an ideologue of any particular sort, but was a man who loved the idea of manipulating the reins of power, however, so he allowed himself to be aligned with some of the more unsavory political leftists around town and formed this thing called the Worker's Party, the Barisan Socialis, and against the People's Action Party. By this time Lee Kuan Yew, to my utter astonishment, I did not believe he was able to do it, had pretty well moved the Communists out of the leadership positions in the PAP, not necessarily in the rank and file. Just about the time I left, holy smokes, Lee Kuan Yew comes through and becomes the Chief Minister, but this was for internal self-government. The British had not yet devised their way to get out.

Q: How were the British that you were talking to see Lee Kuan Yew at that time?

HOLDRIDGE: Well he was one of them in a way, because he was a graduate of Cambridge. I think his wife had first class honors from Cambridge, and he only had second class, but at any rate, he spoke with a British accent. He described himself to me later on, this is not necessarily at the same time, as the last Victorian, and a man who believed in discipline and order and stability. And I think that the British saw that this man just might be able to produce it.

Q: Well when you left there in 1958, where did you go?

HOLDRIDGE: Back to the China Desk.

Q: What was your job on the China Desk, from when to when?

HOLDRIDGE: I was on the China Desk from 1958 until 1962.

Q: That's a long time.

HOLDRIDGE: Well not all of it was at the China Desk as such. There was a reorganization, and I found myself for a while, as the number 2 in the political section. Josiah W. Bennett was the Political Officer. However, he took leave the minute I showed up, and the first thing that happened to me for about a month was that I was running the political section, not knowing what the heck I was doing. And this is, as you mention, the era of Walter Spencer Robertson. When he was meeting visitors his favorite line was “the Chinese Communists have killed 20 million people—I get confused with the committee of one million which was run by a former missionary, Walter Judd.” Anyway, Walter Spencer Robertson was a dedicated anti-Communist. His number 2 was “Jaybird” Jeff Parsons.

Q: How did this team, Walter Robertson has been said in order, because you had a strong Republican Party, this is Eisenhower's time, that you know were somewhat isolationists and all, that Walter Robertson was tossed to the State Department and was allowed to keep Asia under his wing as long as the Europeanists within the government were able to continue NATO ties and all this. I mean, this is China, and that was almost raw meat thrown to Robertson.

HOLDRIDGE: Well Walter Robertson had been in Chungking during the war. I remember him saying that the embassy in Chungking was pretty crude—the toilet facilities were a “bad smell” in the backyard. His war time experiences and his staunch anti-Communist views seemed to fit quite well. Actually I hadn't been there very long when Dean Acheson left and was replaced by Dulles, John Foster Dulles, and I think Dulles' philosophy and Walter Robertson's philosophy were congruent.

Q: Did this, as long as you were on the China desk, you had Walter Robertson as the Assistant Secretary for Asian Affairs, did you find always resent the fact that you had Walter Robertson and anything that came through the system had to go to him, did this have an effect?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, he was not a man without imagination and flexibility. I hardly got back when we walked into the Taiwan Strait crisis. When I was in Hong Kong I was there during the evacuation by the US Navy of the Nationalist troops on the Pachen Islands, and this seemed to have come off pretty well. We were trying to keep the Communists and the Nationalists separated—as Ed Rice who was later Consul General to Hong Kong, used to say "with a hundred miles of blue water separating the two". Anyway, my job at that time was to try to handle, to begin with, just reporting on the developments on the mainland by means of memos to the Secretary or to Walter Robertson, or whatever, that we had gotten essentially from our Consulate General in Hong Kong, and looking after POWs in Korea. One of my colleges was very much involved in that, Bob Aylward, and then the mess concerning Americans who were still being detained in China, and what have you, and helping in a way to backstop the talks that were going on in Geneva between Alex Johnson and Wang Bing Nan.

Q: From the desk, how did you find the reports on China? Did you feel you were getting a good picture?

HOLDRIDGE: To tell you the truth, Stuart, I felt there never was a problem. American Foreign Service Officers had a lot of courage of their convictions, and even though three of our number had been crucified by McCarthy, I don't think that that stopped them from calling the shots as they saw them. We did not have any wishful thinking. It looked to us very much, in the aftermath of the Korean War, that the Chinese Communists were there to stay. We followed such developments on the mainland as the "three anti, five anti," campaign, one campaign after another, but I will say that one of things I found myself deeply involved with when I got back in 1958 was the Taiwan Strait crisis. That was when

the Chinese began to shell the Islands of Quemoy and Matsu very heavily, and made threatening moves toward using force. Nationalist aircraft and Communist aircraft clashed in the strait between Taiwan and these offshore islands, and the US finally decided that it was going to assist the Nationalists by escorting supply vessels up to the three mile limit of Quemoy in particular, Matsu was too far off the mainland to be much of a problem. This was when Khrushchev made a surprise visit to China and the time also when Khrushchev was making noises about the US Mediterranean fleet, turned our ships into “flaming coffins.” He said this during the Lebanon crisis, the first one, which took place when the Iraq royalty was overthrown by the present incumbents around July 14, 1958, so I watched all this. The Chinese were involved in trying to get what they could out of the situation, I suppose, and Taiwan was always their particular problem so I guess they thought they would try us out to see what we would do.

Q: I was trying to get the prospective of the person I was talking to what they did, I mean obviously the Taiwan Strait had everyone involved in this, the Department of Defense, the President, everyone else. What type of things were you doing at that time?

HOLDRIDGE: I remember when we in old Chinese Affairs, Josiah Bennett as head of the political section wrote something called the White Paper on China (which, I was always amused to see, happened to be printed on red paper) and Joe was talking about all these horrible things that the Chinese Communists were doing on the mainland. But he ended up with the words, (I didn't put this in my book, I didn't want to get too deeply into the Taiwan Strait business), but if the situation on the China mainland were so to change that the Communist Chinese would no longer be a threat to their neighbors, the US would take another look at its stance on China policy. Well that's the kind of thing we were doing. This was when I first really got to know Marshall Green. Marshall was a policy adviser to the EA Bureau. We called the Bureau “Far Eastern Affairs” then. Marshall was very much involved in the communiqu# of October 31, 1958 in which John Foster Dulles went to Taiwan and worked out some kind of modus vivendi with Chiang Kai-shek. Marshall accomplished this, and I have to give him the greatest amount of credit. He worked it out

that in the communiqu# it read that the Republic of China on Taiwan would rely principally on cultural means to restore freedom to its compatriots on the mainland and not the use force. In other words they could use propaganda and do what they thought they could accomplish with this across whatever bodies of water were involved, but they were not to use force. You could still see we were trying to keep China and Taiwan separate. Now, there were a lot of complications in there. All of this sort of happened in a sequential period which began back in 1956 with the evacuation of Nationalist troops from the Penghus, that was before I left Hong Kong to go to Singapore and I remember seeing one of the ships the Chinese had shot up belonging to the Ngow Hock Steamship Company and flew the Danish flag, but it was owned by a Chinese, Tan Koh Kee, and I saw it from across from where I used to live in Hong Kong tied up at the Hong Kong and Shanghai Wharf and Godown Company, with holes all over it. Anyway that's back-tracking, I am not keeping a very orderly sequence.

Q: It doesn't bother me. How was the viability of the Nationalist Regime seen from the desk?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, we began to pour all sorts of assistance into the Nationalists, the Taiwan Strait crisis was something of a watershed. We did establish somewhere in this period of time a mutual defense treaty. We had an aid mission of really quite large proportions. To show you how large it was, the present AIT in Taipei now sits in what the old aid mission used to be. I can remember visiting that mission on a trip in 1956, going out there, and it was way out on the outskirts and Taipei with rice paddies all around it, and now it is surrounded by 20 story buildings.

Q: Were you watching developments on Taiwan, was this what you were doing?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes. As a matter of fact, later on I became the desk officer for Taiwan.

Q: How did we view the government of Chiang Kai-shek at that time, the Kuomintang?

HOLDRIDGE: It was sort of a phony, as I saw it. They had the five Yuans, according to the traditional Chinese government: the National Assembly, the Legislative Yuan, the Control Yuan, the Administrative Yuan, and the Inspectorate. But it all really boiled down to Chiang Kai-shek and a few generals around him who seemed to be running the show. The Minister of Defense, who was his son, Chiang Ching Guo, was very important. The so-called professions of democracy at this time were nil. I mean it had to wait until 1986 or, I'm sorry, 1988, anyway fairly recently, that a democratic form of government was established in reality. But they had all of these little clich#s. They went through the motions. I used to go to Taiwan from Hong Kong, or, on one occasion, I made a trip out from the United States, an inspection trip, and I was on Taiwan at the time when Kennedy was inaugurated.

Q: You were out there during the famous debate between Kennedy and Nixon, which seemed to center on Quemoy and Matsu. In retrospect, you wonder how these things happen. Anyway, you had two presidential candidates talking over these two little islands.

HOLDRIDGE: Well, there was the so-called Formosa Resolution, which eventually did pass both house of Congress and was signed by the President, and that was: if in the judgment of the United States, the defense of Quemoy, Matsu, and the Penghus (a small island group in the middle of the Taiwan Strait) was necessary to the defense of Taiwan, we would help. We would render such assistance as may be considered necessary. It is from all of these things that we've been trying to disentangle ourselves from for all these many years. Until the present incumbents came along and are screwing it all up.

Q: Did you find that the politics of the situation, I can't even remember who was saying what on the Quemoy-Matsu thing, but the point was this was on the front burner of American media at the time. We are talking about the 1960 election, the fall of 1960, when the first debate between Nixon and Kennedy took place. Did that have any impact on what you were doing?

HOLDRIDGE: 1950?

Q: 1960, I mean, excuse me.

HOLDRIDGE: 1960. Well, let me see now. We have to sort of go back every four years. If I can remember, I was in Bangkok. In 1952, came Eisenhower's election and then in '56 he was reelected. 1960 was the election in which Kennedy and Eisenhower...

Q: And you were on the China desk at that time.

HOLDRIDGE: I was on the China desk.

Q: I was wondering whether the fact that this was sort of on the front burner of the media at that time because of the presidential election, did this have any effect on our stance at all?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, there was a tremendous amount of attention being paid to China at this time, as I recall. Americans have always had a soft spot in their heart for China. American missionary activity, so much of it was devoted towards China. India, yes, but China, I think, was number one, as far as the missionaries were concerned. We had this wartime relationship, which a lot of people cherished—Madame Chiang Kai-shek visiting the United States and addressing a joint session of Congress, and so on. China was very much with us and it was on the front page a great deal of the time.

Q: Did you have any dealings with Congress at that time or were they coming to the desk for anything?

HOLDRIDGE: No. I really didn't. I was just too far down the pecking order on it. My job, as I saw it, was to be familiar with what was happening, either on the mainland of China or on Taiwan. Along about 1960, 1961 I guess it was, Joe Yager came along and replaced Ed Martin as the director of the Office of Chinese Affairs. And Joe thought that we old

China hands, new China hands, we'd been too much set in our ways. We had been doing the same thing for too long. So he shook us all up and after worrying about the People's Republic of China, I suddenly found myself the desk officer for Taiwan, also in charge of the Republic of China Affairs. That lasted until I was sent to Hong Kong again in 1962.

Q: Did you notice any change in how you operated, what was demanded of you, or just in spirit when the Kennedy administration came in '61?

HOLDRIDGE: I didn't notice anything appreciatively different about it. I think Kennedy was so doggone preoccupied in the first period of his administration with the Bay of Pigs situation that he really didn't spend too much time...I got a call once from Bobby Kennedy. I was sitting at my desk, late in the afternoon when the phone rang. And Bobby Kennedy asked me something, and called me by “John,” like the usual politician's approach. But I can't remember, I don't think it was anything of any great significance. I think Kennedy, while he may have had some idea about some changes, circumstances precluded them. In fact, when Dean Rusk came in as Secretary of State and Kennedy was president, there was a question about the UN vote and Outer Mongolia, the admission of Outer Mongolia to the United Nations. The vice president of the Republic of China, Chen Cheng, was sent here by the Gimo to try to make sure we stayed on the reservation and kept Outer Mongolia out of the UN. I think there was some type of deal made in NY. At the moment I really can't recall that. You might have to get in contact with Jim Leonard or somebody like that, who was closer to it than I was. But anyway, Chen Cheng was greeted with great pomp and circumstance by Kennedy. Kennedy showed up at the banquet at the Mayflower Hotel. Dean Rusk made the main speech for the US, and Kennedy said a few words.

Q: Then you went back to Hong Kong in 1962. You were there from when to when?

HOLDRIDGE: '62 to '66.

Q: What was your job?

HOLDRIDGE: My job, at that time, was chief of the political section. Then we were reorganized. We established a unit called the Mainland Reporting Unit, which had everything to do with mainland China and had nothing to do with what was going on in the local political scene in Hong Kong. There was a small group of people down the hall who handled that. So I was responsible for both political and economic reporting about Communist China.

Q: What was, in the '62 to '66 period, what was happening in China?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, China was going through the throes of the Great Leap Forward and the recovery therefrom. It had started in 1958. We watched its progress through the eyes of the American Consulate General back in CA in '59, and the souring of relations with the Soviet Union. Mao Zedong had the bit in his teeth, I guess. His great idea was to keep the revolution going. His slogan was, “the revolution must be carried through to the end, both at home and abroad.”

Q: How were we seeing the Great Leap Forward? Did we see it for the disaster it was at the beginning?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, we did. We had adequate reporting. The press, people who had been there, refugees. This was the way things worked: we used to interrogate foreigners who came out of China. Americans who were still there, businessmen who had somehow gotten in, and various people who had been in the mainland. And the Brits talked to the Chinese who had come across the border. When all of these people showed up to get their Hong Kong residence permits, if they looked like they were reasonably intelligent, they would be shunted aside, and they would be interrogated by the British Joint Intelligence Committee people, JIC. I have never been able to figure out where the JIC fit in, whether that was MI-6 or whatever the hell they called it. Very complicated. But at any rate, we exchanged our information. A very cozy and useful relationship. The people who I talked to mostly were foreign diplomats, who came out for R&R.

Q: At one time the press was touting, even in the United States, wasn't this an interesting thing, everybody is going to have a steel mill in their backyard...

HOLDRIDGE: We thought that was absolutely ludicrous. They talked about deep plowing and close planting. They would get a large, heavy timber raft, almost, that had spikes through it, and they would winch the damn thing across a field so they would cut way down deep into the soil. And in doing so, of course, they went below the topsoil and got into the substrate, which was infertile. And that was a disaster, And then, of course, the idea was to make steel. What they did was break up their woks, their pots, their guodzi, those round, semi-circular pots and melt them down, and try to make steel out of them. But of course, what they got was low grade iron. It was just a terrible mess. This whole thing began after the collapse of the Hundred Flowers Movement. Mao thought he had reached a stage where he could let up a little bit, “Let one hundred flowers bloom together, let diverse schools of thought contend,” and when he let up the pressure he was astonished to find that people didn't really appreciate much what was going on. So he clamped down again and the reaction to that was the Great Leap Forward.

Q: Actually, correct me if I'm wrong, but I think it was one of the great disasters of civilization. Starvation and all this.

HOLDRIDGE: There was considerable starvation and they were also beset with floods in the middle of all this. So that one might say that Mao had lost the Mandate of Heaven, and what saved the situation was that a bunch of the more realistic leaders in Beijing pushed Mao to the “second line,” as he said, and took over the running of the government themselves. This was Zhou En-lai and a group of people around him, and for a while it looked as if China was going to get back on an even keel, which, of course, led in due course to the Great Leap Forward, excuse me, the Cultural Revolution.

Q: Did we see what a disaster this was, and were we getting the word out within the government?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, we were. We had plenty of information. One of the functions I mentioned to you is that we monitored Chinese radio broadcasts. We also monitored the China press. Under my particular authority, we had the Press Monitoring Unit. I mentioned it the last time that I actually ran that, I was immediate commanding officer of that small subgroup. But then in the Mainland Reporting Unit I had the whole bunch. We had economic analysts, we had Chinese political analysts, we had Americans who were following the mainland press and writing reports. We worked with the British Information Service, which had a radio monitoring unit, and they were catching radio broadcasts that we weren't getting from other sources. Now, FBIS was also involved in this effort, the Foreign Broadcast Information Service. So we were getting information from a whole variety of sources. And reports from refugees from across the other side of the border we got from the British. And we talked to people ourselves. I think it was possible to make a very coherent picture of what was going on, and it was a disaster.

Q: What was your feeling about the way the press in the United States and Europe was treating what was happening in China?

HOLDRIDGE: I think the press was pretty uniform, that nobody except in the Eastern European countries was giving much of a damn about what was happening in China. That is, they were not enthusiastic about it. In fact, by this time, however, the great polemic had started between the USSR and China—Mao vs. Brezhnev. First of all it was Khrushchev and then followed by Brezhnev. It started out in 1957 with the blast against Tito's “Modern Revisionism,” and then it got into attacking the Soviets more directly. I think this was about 1961. I was still on the desk back in Washington when “Long Live Leninism” came out, an editorial in which the Chinese accused the Soviets of having violated Leninist principles, and it really got pretty sticky. While I was in Hong Kong the Soviets tried to put the pieces back together by holding a meeting of World Communist and Worker's Parties in Moscow, this was December 1964, and Zhou En-lai went as the head of the Chinese delegation. The Albanians were thrown out for being heretics, and when they were thrown out Zhou

En-lai got up and walked out with them. There was a real split between the Soviets and the Chinese.

Q: And this was being reflected in what you were reporting?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes. As a matter of fact I think I told you before, before I left Hong Kong in, let me get my times straight, I was still in Hong Kong, and in 1956 I mentioned that the Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet was established and comparing what the Dalai Lama said at the opening ceremony according to the Chinese press with what was released in the English language version of the New China News Agency, you could see that there were some significant omissions from the NCNA English. Going back and figuring it out, you could tell that there was a really bad feeling between the Tibetans and the Chinese which led to flight of the Dalai Lama in 1959.

Q: Who was the Consul General at that time?

HOLDRIDGE: Let's see, in which period of time?

Q: 1962 - 1966?

HOLDRIDGE: Most of that time it, for a good part of that time, it was (I think probably most of it was), Ed Rice. Edward Rice, no, Marshall Green, I'm sorry. Marshall Green to start with, and then Marshall went off to be DCM in Korea and was replaced in the last year and a half I was there by Ed Rice.

Q: What was your impression of these two men and how they operated?

HOLDRIDGE: Well Marshall, of course, a man with his fruitful imagination and fantastic wit, and I think a perception, a depth of perception of what was going on, which was almost intuitive, and Ed Rice a very able man, but very plodding. He would go from A to B

to C to D and no matter how long it took. Whereas Marshall would be able to jump from A to D and not deviate from what happened in the meantime.

Q: You left Hong Kong in 1966. On a career note, what was the feeling? Here it had been China, China, China, basically on this. Did you and your fellow officers see this as a good career move or did you feel you needed to get broader exposure at this time?

HOLDRIDGE: You mean leaving Hong Kong?

Q: Well, leaving watching the China field?

HOLDRIDGE: I didn't really leave China watching. I came back in 1966 and I found myself the Deputy to Fred Green in INR/REA, Research and Analysis for East Asia. Now it's INR/REAP, East Asia and the Pacific. We did not pay much attention to the Pacific Islands in the days when I first got back and in a year Fred left and I took over. Of course I will give you my own little prejudice. The reason the United States got in the terrible bind in Vietnam was that Fred Green's predecessor, Alan S. Whiting was an academician had written a book way back at the time of the Korean War, or somewhat afterwards (it would have been back in the mid-50's) called “China Crosses the Yalu”. And he had what I called the “Yalu Syndrome,” that whenever anything seemed to be serious enough, the Chinese would send in their military forces as they did in Korea and we would have to just duck because “here they come.” Hordes of Chinese, and we'd be involved in a land war in Asia. Well, Alan as the head of REA used to brief Averell Harriman, who at that time was the Assistant Secretary for East Asia and Pacific Affairs. Averell Harriman bought the Alan Whiting thesis when we got involved in Vietnam, that unless we watched ourselves very carefully, stayed away from the Chinese border and didn't do things which would be regarded as provocative by the Chinese, why the Chinese would come in. So he sold that to Averell Harriman and Harriman sold it to Dean Rusk and Dean Rusk sold it to Lyndon B. Johnson. Remember Kennedy was not around. I was in Hong Kong when Kennedy was

assassinated. All very shocking to us of course, but then along come LBJ and LBJ sort of ran that war by himself.

Q: Were you aware when Green and INR, were you sort of looking at things from the longer prospective or was that policy planning, and what were you doing in INR?

HOLDRIDGE: Well what I was doing was trying to, among other things, see if we couldn't get an mission opened in Ulaanbaatar, in the Democratic People's Republic of Mongolia. Also, just continuing to follow event in China, events in Korea, North and South. I had the whole of East Asia to play with. Japan, Vietnam, very much involved in Vietnam. Fred Brown handled Vietnam. Evelyn Colbert was the Southeast Asia head, and she also had Vietnam.

Q: When you say you were trying to keep people honest, what do you mean by that?

HOLDRIDGE: My job in the morning was to carry the sensitive stuff that was taken around in a locked briefcase down to brief, by this time, Bill Bundy, who had succeeded Harriman as Assistant Secretary for EA. So my first job in the morning would be to carry in the various highly classified, ultra highly classified pieces of information that we got from a variety of sources, and go in to brief Bill Bundy. Bill and I got along fine because I never just gave him the raw data, I always tried to put some degree of interpretation, that is, what does this mean in terms of our interests or policies.

Q: How were we feeling, since you were dealing with Vietnam, and among other things, Laos, what was sort of the thrust of how did we see things at that time from your prospective?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, it did seem to be like an interminable toothache. It was quite clear that whatever tactics we were using when I first became involved in this Vietnam episode—I remember Fred Green telling me he had heard a briefing by Westy, Westmoreland, and Westy said that trying to catch the Viet Cong was like going after termites with a screw

driver— and so his solution to the whole problem would be to bomb the hell out of North Vietnam, excuse my profanity, but that is about the way it seemed to come out. But we could not do it because of the limitations that had been put on what we could bomb and what we couldn't bomb thanks to my friend Al Whiting, and what had gone on previously, that every time there was an air raid which seemed to get close to Hanoi, and I was involved in this matter, we would sort of look over the danger spot and decide whether or not this would be of sufficient importance to create tensions between ourselves and China or ourselves and the USSR, and so on.

Q: How did Bundy look upon the..., you were doing this from when to when now?

HOLDRIDGE: I did this from 1962, wait a minute now, from 1966 to 1969.

Q: So we are already well into Vietnam.

HOLDRIDGE: Indeed we were. I forgot to mention that while I was in Hong Kong a mission led by Max Taylor with Mike Mansfield a part of it, arrived and its whole idea was to look into whether the US should involve itself any more deeply in Vietnam affairs. And I was asked for my opinion, and I said, well, if you want to go in, go in, but make sure that whatever you do, we have the wherewithal to carry it off. I talked about what I call the Suez Syndrome, which I had seen when I was in Singapore when the British and French tried to recapture Suez Canal. Actually they did, but they made the very egregious mistake of sending in their air power a week earlier than their ground forces. They could not get their ground forces ashore in time, and while they took out the Egyptian airfields and destroyed Egyptian air power, there was this interval or hiatus before they could get there on the ground. In the meantime world public opinion hardened. Eisenhower was fit to be tied because he had not been clued in by the Brits or the French and world opinion had turned so badly against the British and the French that they were unable to hold on to whatever territory they had gained and they had to pull out in due course. And this thought has stuck with me ever since. So I said, if you are going to go into Vietnam, make sure that you have

all the wherewithal that is necessary and that you use all the force that you get in, with everything that you have got and you get out as quickly as you can.

Q: That war is the epitome of incrementalism.

HOLDRIDGE: That's right, incrementalism. I watched Westy panic after Tet in 1968 and when he called for another, what was it, 900,000 men, some astronomical figure of American soldiers.

Q: After the Tet offensive.

HOLDRIDGE: He was the last person in the world who should have had that job. Never could get off his experiences in the World War II period.

Q: Were we reporting on China at that point? Although our focus was heavily onto Vietnam, were we looking at China and seeing China both as it was splitting with the Soviet Union yet it was an ally of Vietnam? How did we look at that?

HOLDRIDGE: We looked at this as being very paradoxical. On the one hand, the Chinese had to support their Vietnamese allies, the Chinese Foreign Minister talked of about a “lips and teeth relationship,” while the Soviets, at this time, were shipping a lot of war material through China to Vietnam, which the Chinese were interfering with because of their dispute with the Soviet Union. Eventually, I think the Soviets got to the point where everything went pretty well by sea to Haiphong, which stopped abruptly when we mined Haiphong. But be that as it may, the Chinese, the Russians, and the Vietnamese were all in this together willy-nilly, in some kind of a very uneasy and uncomfortable position.

Q: As a China expert, was it clear at that time how much the Chinese and the Vietnamese really didn't like each other?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, I never believed for one minute that the Chinese were going to come charging in. They didn't want a direct conflict with the U.S. Remember what was going on

in China at this time. Starting in about 1966, the “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” was on, and the military in China was being devastated by it. The military was the only organizational structure that Mao Zedong could really rely upon. He pretty well ruined the bureaucracy. So military men were being dispatched all over China to run enterprises, and you could imagine what this did to the combat capability of the PLA. We already had got some idea what the Great Leap Forward had done through the so-called Tibetan Papers.

Q: What's this?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, some US supported Khamba tribes people operating out of Nepal got into Tibet and shot up a Chinese military convoy and brought back a lot of miscellaneous documents. One of these happened to be the annual political report of this particular military unit for the year. It turned out that the People's Liberation Army, as a consequence of the Great Leap Forward, was in shambles. No tires for their trucks, no gasoline, no ammunition, shortages of everything, morale stunk, and whatever. The PLA. had hardly recovered from that—if it had recovered—when China attacked India in 1962. I think that part of the reason the Chinese attacked the Indians in 1962 was to show the Indians they weren't to be counted out. Krishna Menon thought, we'll just throw these Chinese out of the disputed territory, and the Chinese showed them.

Q: This is considerably earlier.

HOLDRIDGE: This is 1962. By the time the period which we're talking about now, the Cultural Revolution was well under way, and the same kind of dissipation of combat strength on the part of the PLA was becoming evident. They talked very belligerently about “people of the world unite,” and the countryside of the world surrounding the cities of the world, but it's like, “let's you and him fight and we'll hold your coat.” Let the other guy do the fighting and the Chinese would take care of China. I never thought for one minute that the Chinese would come in like they had in Korea. Now they did have a presence in Laos, and they did assist in keeping open lines of communication in Vietnam, but they also had

a certain degree of political control there, too, which, I think, the Vietnamese must have resented.

Q: Was it coming then from the top on our side from Dean Rusk and all, the idea that if we get to go after the North Vietnamese, we have to be very careful about the border areas?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes. There was a little gang of people who used to get together and look over the targeting. Now and again INR would be asked to put in a little bit, Hal Sonnenfeldt, my colleague who was RSB, Research for the Soviet Bloc we used to call it. I was REA, Research for East Asia. Now and again we would put in a little bit but not a heck of a lot. It was the Executive Director of the Department of State...the guy that is chief of staff of the Secretary of State, Ben Read, he was there. He sits over there in the Secretary's office and is in effect, the chief of staff. Then, there was of course the Secretary, Dean Rusk himself. These people, a very small group of people in the Department of State, made input into the targeting and made sure that there were no transgressions of certain lines, the so-called “donut” around Haiphong and Hanoi. We didn't go inside a certain area. And we did once, by accident, and all sort of screams and yells went up, both on our side and from the other side. So it was very carefully circumscribed.

Q: How did we see..., the Cultural Revolution, of course, was ripping China apart, what were you getting out of China?

HOLDRIDGE: What we were getting out of China was that as of about 1968 things had really gotten pretty bad in terms of the relationship between China and the Soviet Union. The polemic had reached heights way back earlier. The Soviets had broken off their agreement with the Chinese on the “Agreement on New Technology for National Defense,” in other words, giving China nuclear capability. They had pulled out all their advisors and broken off all of their economic relationships with China. That was back in the Great Leap Forward period, in 1962, when they were horrified with what was going on in China then.

But it got worse and worse in terms of the political relationship. The Chinese were actually competing with the Soviets for leadership of the World Communist Movement, which was not appreciated. Then 1968 rolls along and the “Brezhnev doctrine” comes into play; the Soviet tanks roll into Prague, and the Chinese begin to see that maybe the Soviets, if they were capable of slapping down the Czechs, maybe they could slap down the Chinese, too.

Q: So were we seeing a type of restructuring of the Chinese defense posture towards the Soviet Union at that time?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes. Well, as I say in my book, and this is something that I dwell upon, that it must have been obvious to the Chinese that they were very vulnerable.

Q: There had been some fighting on the Amur River.

HOLDRIDGE: Well, there was the Damansky Island, or Chenpao business, and the PLA and Red Army fought over ownership of the island. That took place in March, 1969. What really got the Chinese upset was the use of the Soviet power against Prague, to put down the “Prague Spring.” And we did try to open up a dialogue again with the Chinese as a consequence of that, and the Chinese responded favorably, to begin with. The problem for the Chinese was they had not sorted themselves out sufficiently to respond favorably, so things sort of just dragged along until the episode you mentioned, the Damansky Island or Chenpao incident occurred along the Amur River. By that time I was no longer in INR. To my utter surprise and some discomforture, I was transferred from INR to the National Security Council. My old friend and colleague, Dick Sneider, had been, when the Nixon administration came and Kissinger became the National Security Adviser, Dick had been tapped to be the Senior Staff Member for East Asia and the Pacific. But that didn't last very long. Dick saw an opportunity that came about that time. We signed the treaty on the return of Okinawa to Japanese control in 1969 and Dick got the job, grabbed it I think, maybe even created it for all I know, with a rank of Minister of the Embassy in Tokyo, of

being responsible for working out the details of the reversion. So he got out of the NSC. as fast as he could. I think that he and Kissinger, their personalities were hardly compatible.

Q: Dick Sneider, the very hard charging man who told it just as it is, I think.

HOLDRIDGE: Also quite ambitious, and almost as Byzantine as Kissinger, if not more so. Anyway, so he left and guess who got stuck: me. So I went over in July, 1969 to the National Security Council.

Q: How did you view the National Security Council at that time? I mean this was a brand new administration, it had been Johnson's National Security Council, and now you had Nixon using Henry Kissinger. What was the atmosphere?

HOLDRIDGE: We didn't really know much about it. All I can really tell you is that thanks to, I don't know if it was Richard Nixon or Henry Kissinger or what, within a few days after the new administration took over, and Nixon took the oath of office, the Department of State was charged with supervising a whole series of reevaluations of US policies in trouble spots all over the world, one of which was China. This was through the NSSMs, Nissams we used to call them, or National Security Study Memorandum process. NISM 14, as I recall, dealt with China, and whether we should change our China policy. Remember, Nixon back as far 1967, had written in Foreign Affairs Quarterly that there ought to be a change in US-China policy, when the time came and with Vietnam being no longer a problem. So, anyway, this was one of the things we dealt with, but we didn't know much about the this animal, what it was going to be like, what it was going to do. The Department of State still had a role. The way that the NISMs worked, contributions would be called for by the National Security Council from relevant agencies of the government, State, CIA, Defense, what have you, on what they thought the issues would be and what the options should be with respect to all of these areas of concern. The way it was worked out finally, before an NSDM, National Security Decision Memorandum, was to be issued, was that there was a review by something called the SIG, the Senior Intergovernmental

Group, which was chaired by a senior Department of State representative. As far as I could tell, as of the time I went to the National Security Council, which was July, 1969, that the Department of State was doing its job, it had a senior person in charge of correlating all these various contributions, putting them together, coming up with a memorandum that would go forward to the President, after which a decision memorandum would be issued. So that looked okay to me. I didn't have any problems with that. My problem was I heard they worked atrocious hours far into the night. In State I was getting used to going home at 6:30.

Q: You were in the National Security Council from when to when?

HOLDRIDGE: From '69 to '73, virtually four years.

Q: This would be a good place to stop,

Today is the 21st of August of 1995.

John, you had just been assigned to the National Security Council. We want to wallow in those years, from '69 to '73.

HOLDRIDGE: As much as I can without stamping all over my book. I will try to touch on aspects that I really don't mention in the book.

Q: Just for the record, you are writing or have written a book?

HOLDRIDGE: I have written a book.

Q: Which has not yet been published. Can you give me the personal setting of the National Security Council when you arrived, in the summer of '69. And also something about the atmospherics right at the beginning because this is very early in the Nixon period. Nixon came in January of '69.

HOLDRIDGE: Right. Well, they had gone through the exercise, which I think I mentioned last time, that is reviewing US policy towards every major area in the world of which NSSM, National Security Study Memorandum 14, concerned itself with China, and should we or should we not make some changes in our China policy in the direction of improving the relationship. The decision was ultimately yes. About that time, I was detached from being the head of INR/REA and sent over to take Dick Sneider's (?) place on the National Security Council as senior staff member. As of then, the National Security Council, was still shaking itself down, and Kissinger had all of these various strange people running around, one of whom was his great friend, Mort Halperin. Do you remember Halperin?

Q: Yes. Could you give a little about his background?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, Mort was a kind of an East Asia type. He had been Assistant Secretary of State of Defense for ISA, International Security Affairs, in the Pentagon. A very intense, ambitious, smug, but very bright younger guy. He was on the NSC staff and I don't think he and Kissinger got along at all well. Eventually, they parted with some degree of acrimony. Remember Kissinger had the FBI bug Mort Halperin's phones, and he sued Kissinger. That suit lasted for years and years and years. I think it was just a couple of years ago that something was finally worked out. I don't think Kissinger had to pay any money or anything. But I think the main problem there was, and this also had something to do with Dick Sneider, they wanted more personal latitude in policy determination than Kissinger was prepared to give them. Certainly I think this is the case with Mort Halperin. Mort felt that he was being submerged, and if I'm not mistaken, he was the one that came up with this whole NSSM/NSDM system anyway.

Q: These were the papers?

HOLDRIDGE: The papers.

Q: It has been said by many people that when Kissinger arrived he came out with the idea of having these papers done in order to tie the State Department up in knots while they produced the papers so he could get on with business. You were on both sides of this. Could you talk about this?

HOLDRIDGE: Oh no. On the contrary, as I think I mentioned to you last time, the original pattern of the way these things were supposed to work was that each concerned agency would draw up its own paper for the study and these papers would be presented to the SIG, Senior Interdepartmental or Intergovernmental Group, which was chaired invariably by a senior member of the State Department. The China one was chaired by Winthrop Brown, who had been ambassador to Korea, very respected, a very capable Foreign Service Officer. The pieces were put together in some kind of a memorandum which was then sent to the NSC, looked over by the NSC Staff and maybe further tinkered with, and then sent on to the President. Now Kissinger's idea about these doggone papers that came was that if you looked at the options, there were usually three options. Option one was clearly unacceptable for some reason and option three was unacceptable for another reason, so that left only option two.

Q: I've heard the story that usually what it was in any case, one declare war, two abject surrenders, I mean three abject surrenders and then you...

HOLDRIDGE: Anyway that's the way it worked. And they had all sorts of people running around doing the serious things that I could never quite figure out. Tony Lake was the bag carrier so to speak. He filled the job that was later taken over by Win Lord. But as I understand it looking back, that Tony Lake did not do anything of any substantive input. I recall on the first trip that Nixon made round the world, we got to Bangkok, and as I mentioned to you, we were invited to a dinner by his Majesty the King for which I had prepared in advance by borrowing a full dress suit from Bob Oakley. All my years in State, and I never had a morning coat, I never had a full dress suit. So I did buy a shirt and a tie to go with it, so I had the appurtenances, but the suit was Bob Oakley's. That was one

of the most gosh awful, horrible experiences in my diplomatic career. Hotter than hell, we were in the Royal Palace next to Chao Phya River, and the banquet hall was on the second floor; I guess all the heat rose up. Anyway it was just incredibly hot inside the banquet hall, a long table, and behind every chair was an equerry or servant in livery, but they served us an absolutely inedible dinner. Armor plated chicken, and we tried to struggle with that. I found that neither the lady on my left or right, neither of them spoke any English, so we just sort of sat there and tried to cope with this execrable dinner. This was supposed to be a Western style banquet. Then we stumbled out and had to sit down for another hour listening to one of the members of the Royal Family, who had some pretensions for being a soprano, sing some songs. This was like the old water torture. Gosh! It went on and on and on. We thought it would never end. But it finally did and as we stood on the steps of the Royal Palace, waiting to go back to the guest house which was inside the same compound, there were several of us, I can't recall precisely who, the cast of characters did change, I saw this little figure staggering across the court yard there in the dim light of the lights from the Palace, and in each hand was an enormous black briefcase. He was hardly able to move with this big load, and that was Tony Lake with the “take” from the airplane. We have always had of course, classified information sent to us, and he was taking it over to give to Henry Kissinger.

Q: Well back to the National Security Council when you first arrived, where was it located?

HOLDRIDGE: It was located physically in two places. There were two or three people sitting in an office next to Henry Kissinger. Henry Kissinger's original office was in the basement of the White House. You would go in the entrance to the West Wing of the White House and then the door to the right was the entrance to the NSC, and Kissinger's office was very close to that door; then next to that was another office in which there were two people, one was Tony Lake and Al Haig came in there later. Then an anteroom on the other side, where there were some secretaries—a sort of a larger place with space for typewriters and desks and so on that was right next to the entrance to the White House situation room. Now, the working stiffs, of which I was one, were on the other side of

West Executive Avenue in the old executive office building on the third floor. We had to commute whenever anything happened. Kissinger used the conference room of the situation room as his place to have staff meetings. So we were in and out of there all the time.

Q: When you arrived, you have already mentioned that something was real inhibitive before sort of saluting and taking the job was the horrible hours they did. Kissinger had only been in there for a while and Nixon and Kissinger were, I'm not sure how close they were at that point, what were you being told by sort of the Foreign Service Network about the NSC and the personalities that you got at that time?

HOLDRIDGE: Well I don't think the Foreign Service looked with great enthusiasm upon the NSC as organized under Kissinger. I had been in INR of course, and Fred Green, when he was the head of the INR/REA operation of which I was Deputy, I had gone over to the NSC and we had actually sat down and talked to McGeorge Bundy. That particular NSC didn't seem to be interfering in the normal activities of what the Foreign Service was doing. But certainly, after we got back from the round the world trip—I got off in Bangkok incidentally, and a colleague of mine, Hal Saunders, took over for that section that went on to India and Pakistan, that was his area, and I guess somebody else must have covered the European bit of the Soviet Bloc, the stop in Romania, it was probably Hal Sonnenfeldt who went on. Anyway, where was I?

Q: You were talking about what you were getting from the Foreign Service.

HOLDRIDGE: Well, to the Foreign Service at this point the NSC had not loomed as a dragon. It was something that was working with us, we thought, and I had sat in on the deliberations representing the NSC on the NSSM 14 chaired by Win Brown. I thought what had come up with his recommendations were eminently sensible. No problems—the bureaucracy had worked. To give Kissinger credit, he always made sure that the views of everyone of the agencies concerned were in fact reflected in the paper that emerged.

He always had an extra paragraph for the President which said, now you may consider this, you may consider that view, but for various reasons maybe you ought to focus on this particular aspect. At any rate, the agencies did get their voice heard and their day in court. So there was no great problem, but then the turning point I'm sure came, I mentioned it in the book that I collaborated along with Bill Stokes and Marshall Green, that after we got back, Kissinger decided, or the President decided, maybe at Kissinger's urging, that there would be an annual report to the Congress on the Foreign Policy of the United States that was drafted entirely inside the National Security Council, no clearances from State, no input from State, nothing. After we had issued it, Nixon called in all of the staff members of the NSC and sat us all in the Cabinet Room, next to the Oval Office and we all arranged ourselves around the table, Kissinger on Nixon's right, Nixon made it very plain by golly, that Foreign Policy was going to be run by the NSC. No two ways about it, that we were to keep our distance from State and not in fact do anything more than to ask for inputs, but certainly not to ask for advice. It was up to geniuses on the NSC to come up with our own solutions, Kissinger sitting at the top of this pyramid. In fact to jump ahead a couple of years, I had one Foreign Service Officer assigned to me, I don't know if I should mention his name...

Q: Mention it, you can take it out later if you want.

HOLDRIDGE: This officer had worked for me in Hong Kong and I knew him very well and I was glad to receive him. In fact I may have picked him out myself because he's a bright guy. So he came over, but he had this insufferable habit of picking up a telephone when some decision was about to be announced and tipping off people in the Department of State ahead of time. There was often opportunity in the time lag for people in the State to call up and say “What the hell is going on here? What's happening.” Then I got a call one Saturday from Al Haig, who said “get rid of him.” So I had the unpleasant task of calling up this officer, who never came in on a Saturday morning though everybody else did—I tried to be as gentle as I could. He wanted to know, “what about Saturdays,” and I said, “well you know it's up to you, what kind of work have you got to do. If you think you're in

a box such that you can get by without coming in, all right, but if you think you need to do something by all means be there." I was always there. So it was a Saturday morning that I called him and told him he was fired. Very difficult task. Very unpleasant.

Q: Well, among the staff, I mean here you were, you were people obviously picked for your brightness, knowledge and all that, but at the same time, any organization such as the NSC can probably only focus on a couple of things, maybe like the Soviet Union or China, Vietnam or something like that, an awful lot of things that are going on in Central America, Latin America, Africa and all this, to completely discount the advice of the State Department which for whatever one might think of it, they are paying people to sit in these places to deal with these countries, didn't this cause some disquiet among the NSC staff?

HOLDRIDGE: Well I think it did, yes. Furthermore, the way it worked was the NSC was organized partly on a geographical basis. I was East Asia, Roger Morris had Africa, and Hal Saunders had South Asia, more or less corresponding to the same bureaus that would be in the Department of State. So this was the geographical line, but then there were two other groups. There was the Systems Group, people who were kind of a spin-off, in a way, from the way the Secretary of Defense, McNamara, who had organized a Systems Group over there at the Pentagon to try to do the impossible—to run a war on a bottom line basis. And then there was the third group, Long Range Planning, and the long range planners sat up there and dreamed their dreams, but the only problem was whatever they came up with, Kissinger never had time to read because the impact of all of these various events, horrors and such, that he was always preoccupied, and besides Henry had his social life to take care of. Did I mentioned to you when the President was pinning the stars on Al Haig that Al became a very close assistant to Henry and operated on Henry's behalf in many different capacities? He was Colonel when he came over from the Pentagon and in due course he got his stars. So we all trooped up, us senior people, not all the juniors, but the senior people trooped up to Henry's office to watch the President pin the stars on Al Haig's shoulders and the President made a little joke. He said that he frequently used to take walks around the White House grounds at night and he would walk up West Executive

Avenue and he'd see that the light in Henry's office was dark. “Henry wasn't there, Henry was in Georgetown.” (Henry really loved the appurtenances of power.) Then he would look in the window next to it which was lighted and would look in and see this figure hunched over the desk writing away, and that was Al Haig. Far into the night. So Henry always managed to keep a tuxedo or a black tie suit in his office and he would hie himself off to Georgetown, where he really enjoyed the trimmings of power, quite obviously. He used to say “power is the greatest aphrodisiac.”

Q: This was when he was going out with some starlets and things like this.

HOLDRIDGE: Oh yes, Jill St. John was one of them.

Q: The President told you all that you were not to seek advice, at the same time you would have to be acting in a vacuum if you weren't calling on the resources of the State Department?

HOLDRIDGE: Well indeed. I kept a close liaison as I thought I could get away with with Marshall Green. He and I were roughly co-equal in status and we managed to maintain our friendship come what may. I kept in close contact with the Department of State. For example, I believe it was 1970 there was a Chief of Missions meeting which I attended in Baguio in the Philippines. Marshall and Alex Johnson were very much involved in this. Alex was the Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs and Marshall was Assistant Secretary for East Asia and the Pacific. Anyway, I was sort of clued in and kept together with them and I would indeed seek them out. But, they were more of an operating branch. Have you ever heard of the Special Guerrilla Units, i.e. “sheep-dipped” Thai forces?

Q: I have heard something, but would you explain what these are?

HOLDRIDGE: In Laos we had been involved for quite some time supporting the RLG, the Royal Lao Government, against the Pathet Lao. And the Pathet Lao, were, of course, backed by the North Vietnamese, including PT-76 tanks from the Soviet Union. The

key to the whole resistance was the Plain of Jars, and there was an airfield at the west end of that, next to a village called Long Tieng, at the foot of what we called Skyline Ridge. To help protect this airfield against attacks, which would come regularly, every dry season, when we could expect an attack from the Pathlet Lao, backed up by North Vietnamese. We of course, used American air power. Also the Royal Lao Air Force, flying T-6 aircraft and T-28s later, did very well in helping to keep down the casualty list. But on one occasion, not too long after I had been in the NSC, it looked as if the Pathet Lao might well overrun this whole complex with the help of North Vietnamese tanks. Now, there had been for quite some time a Thai artillery battery up on top of Skyline Ridge, 155 howitzers. Having been an artilleryman myself, I always thought 155 seemed a little bit ponderous, but they were up there, dragged up or flown up or something, how they got up there I do not know. But then it was decided to reinforce them with some infantry to help protect them because the Pathet Lao understood very well if they could take that ridge, overrun that battery, everything else would fall. The Plain of Jars would cease to be a place where the Royal Lao forces could hold and keep the Vietnamese and the Pathet Lao at bay. So when an attack was made, it was decided in the NSC the Thai were asked if they would contribute an infantry battalion. They agreed, and consequently some Thai infantry battalion somewhere was picked out and dressed up in Royal Lao Army uniforms, flown in by “silver sided” C-117s, a twin engine, twin boom transport aircraft. Anyway, they came into Vientiane and were seen all over the place. So it became an open secret that Thai forces were there. They made their way to the top of this ridge overlooking the airfield, I'm trying to remember the name of it, it doesn't fly into my mind at the moment (The airfield was called Long Tieng, as previously noted), I was just thinking of it the other day. Anyway, they succeeded in driving off the Pathet Lao, who got within about 150 meters from the top of that doggone ridge and couldn't make it the rest of the way, tanks or no. They pulled back, and this was a great success for the defense. And so this being the case, people looked at further contributions of the Thai, and it was decided again in the NSC, and I suppose there was some input from other parts of the government, with CIA supporting this whole operation. I'm not sure where Mel Laird would have stood. He was

always kind of ambivalent—I'll tell you about that in a minute. At any rate, the Secretary of State would be present, and all the other people would be there, and the decision was made to go for organizing new forces called SGU, Special Guerrilla Units. The Thai picked out some bright and active young officers from their regular army, and around them they organized actual volunteers. These people were paid quite well, thank you, and given training in Thailand and then put into various places in Laos, Savannakhet, for example, down the Mekong River or more forces up there on the Plain of Jars area, and in a number of different places, to help to fend against the incursions of the Lao communists, the Pathet Lao backed by the Vietnamese. It worked out pretty well, these SGUs. The Thai were not known for their aggressiveness. They didn't get out of their prepared positions, but if they were dug into prepared positions, they fought just beautifully. They did the job and they stabilized the scene.

Q: Was the NSC and your involvement in this, how did it work? It was a nice idea, but there had to be some military coordination in all this. And this would bring the Defense Department in.

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, the CIA primarily because the CIA had access to resources seemingly unlimited, Air America and what have you. When I say “silver sided” airplanes, these C-117s or C-124s or whatever, they bore no markings on them whatsoever. And then there was Air America. One time I visited Vietnam and I flew in on an Air America liaison plane, it must have been a Piper Cub, bouncing around across the Mekong. The CIA could reach into its capacious pockets and come up with almost anything. The way these things worked out, once a decision had been handed down, a Presidential Determination might have been made. Sometimes they were never put on paper—so much for the archives—the principals would sit around a table in the Situation Room or conference room. Kissinger would preside and he would go around and say, what are you going to do? Alex Johnson would back working with the Thai and the ruling forces in Thailand (at this time it was Thanat, Thanom, and Air Marshall Dawi, whom I had known way back as a group captain). Kissinger would go around the table. There would be David Packard, maybe,

representing the Defense Department, and somebody from the Treasury, often, “how are you going to pay for all this?” And they would figure out what to do and decide then and there, and then highly classified cables would go out, back-channeled many of them, so that they never saw the light of normal day. People would be pulled off to do what they were going to do. As I say, this whole operation in terms of what had happened in Laos, was quite successful until the very end, when the fall of Vietnam meant the fall of Laos also.

Q: In the NSC was Laos separated from Vietnam as far as who was looking after it?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, Laos was sort of a side show until we discovered that the doggone Ho Chi Minh Trail ran into very large, significant chunks of Laos. Many operations, and this is one of the great tragedies of the whole war, were that a lot of very young and very able Air Force officers were assigned to Laos to fly T-28s and try to attack convoys as they became visible along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. In fact, the C-130 gunships, which came out during this period when I was with the NSC, were designed primarily for this kind of activity, to try pick up, through various sensors, where the forces coming down the trail were down in Laos, and then go in with these Spookies and shoot them up. Originally they were using C-47s with mini-guns in them, but then they got more sophisticated, and they even had 105 howitzers aboard them, and all sorts of arms. They flew along the trail at night. Another thing they did was to infiltrate people, long range penetration groups, to plant sensors along areas where we thought the VC, or the North Vietnamese really, would be coming. So there was a regular check on it. Anyway, a lot of these poor guys got shot down, and nobody seems know what happened to them. Out of all the POWs or people who were MIAs I think we only recovered a handful, 10 or 12, something like that, from Laos. The rest just disappeared.

Q: Was there somebody who was on the NSC while you were there who was sort of Mr. Vietnam?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, in a way, yes, and in a way, no. It depended on whether we got into the question of the negotiations with the Vietnamese on ending the war. And that was Dr. Kissinger and he was working by this time with Al Haig, let's see, who else was involved in this little operation, Bill Stearman, who may still be on the NSC staff for all I know.

Q: He is in and out. I've interviewed him. He still goes in there from time to time.

HOLDRIDGE: Well, Bill is sort of a stalwart. And John Negroponte, who I see from time to time.

Q: Where is he now?

HOLDRIDGE: He was ambassador to Mexico, but he's got some job back here in Washington. Maybe he's got another ambassadorial appointment. Anyway, I ran into him fairly recently. He was much younger so he's still active in the government as opposed to those of us who have reached retirement. This was the “in” group. Then Winston Lord when he came in, but Winston didn't really arrive on the scene and become what he is today until the expedition from Vietnam into Cambodia took place. That was in 1970, in April. And I was the one, I'm afraid, who helped throw the switch on that. I had no compunction about it. We knew the Vietnamese were misusing Cambodian territory, and that when Lon Nol staged this coup, on the 18th of March, 1970, against Sihanouk, even Lon Nol found the stench of giving up large sections of Cambodia to Vietnamese control more than he could endure. Lon Nol was not, in my opinion, an admirable person. However, he did stage a coup against Sihanouk. Sihanouk happened to be in Moscow at the time, so he couldn't do anything about it. The Soviets, I understand, didn't even tell him about what had happened in Phnom Penh until he was on the way to the airport. And Gromyko said, oh, by the way your royal highness, there is something you should know. So Sihanouk got to Beijing, where he holed up and spent a lot of his time there, also in North Korea. The misuse of Cambodian territory, in my judgment, was a flagrant extension of the war to another country, and if the people of that country, the leadership objected,

then they had every right to try to do something about it. And one of my jobs then was looking around, trying to get arms and ammunition for the Cambodian forces, who were armed mostly with a lot of miscellanea left over by the French. I won't mention the country, they would hotly deny it, but a large country, an island country to the south of Cambodia came through with AK-47s and ammunition to match and flew in this stuff just in the nick of time. About a month after the coup, April, it was pretty obvious that the Cambodian forces were having a really tough time. The North Vietnamese, essentially the North Vietnamese regulars, at this point, were at the Bassac River, which was five kilometers from Phnom Penh. There was an NSC meeting, in which I wrote out the situation, I was told to by Kissinger, A, the situation, and B, what are the implications. He took that up to an NSC meeting and that led to the American, quote, “incursion,” unquote, into Cambodia, which began about the end of April, 1st of May, I don't remember.

Now this is a little bit roundabout concerning Tony Lake, Roger Morris, and Bill Watts, three of them on Kissinger's staff. Watts had been more of the administrative type, Roger Morris, the Africanist, and Tony Lake, the man of all work, but all decided this was more than they could take. So they quit. I was working late one night at the White House, and walking across the street from the old Executive Office Building into the West Wing of the White House, and through Kissinger's window—the lights were on at this occasion—I could see through the venetian blinds a impassioned argument going on between Kissinger and these three guys, who next day were no longer there. And this is when Win Lord came into the picture and filled in, absolutely no questioned about where he stood.

Q: I've never quite understood, again it depends on where you stood when the incursion of Cambodia took place. I was in Saigon. I knew what was going on in Cambodia, and it didn't bother me a bit. I was wondering, will it work, will it be effective or not. Since it was war, obviously the North Vietnamese were a great presence in Cambodia, I didn't quite understand the passion that came boiling up from people like Bill Watts, Win Lord, Roger

Morris, and others about this step into Cambodia. You know, the mold had already been broken. We were bombing there. Why did people feel so passionately about it?

HOLDRIDGE: Extension of the war essentially. As a result of the Cambodian episode there was a big rally down on the Ellipse, in front of the White House. College kids came from all over the US, my daughter from Oberlin College in Ohio included, to join the crowd and protest against this extension of the war. Candlelight procession across the Memorial Bridge at night. My wife's greatest friend from her college days in Cornell came down to join in that candlelight procession. So there was this great feeling, it intensified the sentiment in the United States against the war.

Q: Did you in the NSC, having your daughter..., were you getting the sense that no matter what might be the practicalities of the war that the United States wouldn't be there for a long time so we better get ready to cut and run?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, that's what we were doing. The whole idea of the Cambodian episode was to preserve the concept of Vietnamization. It was felt that if the VC, the North Vietnamese, actually gained control over that section of Cambodia, at least to the east of the Mekong River, and it was theirs, there wouldn't be a darn thing we could do about their being able to attack any place along the line of their choosing and with the supplies they needed to finish off the job, this could, in fact, destroy President Nixon's Vietnamization program, which, incidentally, dated back to the conference at Midway. Anyway, Nixon flew out there and Dick Sneider (?) was the representative of the NSC behind Kissinger at the time. And that's when Vietnamization was decided upon. So on the one hand, while I was on the NSC staff, we were indeed bringing in some reinforcements, but the other thing was this plan to draw down US forces and to turnover the fighting essentially to the Vietnamese themselves. By this time, in my judgment, it was far too late for us to turn it over to the Vietnamese. We had taken the attitude way back from 1965 on, “you little people get out of the way and let us professionals, us big boys, do the job, we'll do it for you.” We never really adequately built up either a sense of a unity of purpose on the part

of the Vietnamese armed forces, who fought very well under many circumstances, nor did we build a nation. President Thieu was there, and for a while, Ky, and before that, a number of other ephemeral figures were on the stage. But we never engaged in nation building to try to let these people learn from what was being done and to run the show for themselves. In fact, I sat in, as an NSC member, on what was known as the Vietnam Working Group, chaired by Bill Sullivan, over in State, in his office. And there was George Blanchard, who turned out to be a four star general later on, class of 1944 at West Point; people from the Agency, Bill Colby frequently, or someone of his stature. Others would sit around and we'd go over such things like land reform and the budget, how the various programs were working, including the one that picked out of the crowd those people who were believed to be Viet Cong cadres and quietly taken care of.

Q: This is the Phoenix program.

HOLDRIDGE: The Phoenix Program, that's right. Anyway, theoretically, the operations were in the hands of State or of some of the other departments, but in practice the policy came out of the White House. My job frequently, as I mentioned before, was to get in touch with Marshall Green and say, well, here is what the policy is, this is what has been decided, and this is what we want you to do, prepare telegrams and then send them over to us for clearance.

Q: Were you involved in the later part of the Vietnamization and the trip of Nixon to Guam?

HOLDRIDGE: Oh yes. That was earlier. That was in July, 1969.

Q: You must have just arrived then.

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, just arrived with much “sturm und drang.” I had just come onto the NSC staff, which was preparing for Nixon's round-the-world trip, and had noticed that the President and Mrs. Nixon were to stay at Malacanang Palace. There was going to be a presidential election coming up that same fall, November, in the Philippines. Roxas was

the opposition candidate and I thought, gosh, if the President stays at Malacanang he's going to be taken over by the Marcoses, he will be used by the Marcoses for political advantage. I wanted to remove the President entirely from any scent of being involved in internal Philippine politics, and put him in the Intercontinental Hotel, where I was and the NSC staff had its headquarters. But, oh no, we found out very shortly from Madame Marcos that if no Malacanang, you might as well just overfly the Philippines. So the President didn't want to offend old friends. That was his big problem. He stayed at Malacanang with Henry Kissinger, and a couple of staff aides on the other side of the Pasig River in the state guest house on the edge of the golf course. The Pasig River was an open sewer and going across this damn river in a boat, which I did in one the Philippine Navy launches, you had to hold your nose it was so terrible.

Q: Obviously you were just on board but did you get involved in the Guam...

HOLDRIDGE: That came to me as a complete and utter surprise, I have to tell you. Dick Kennedy (a close staff aide to Dr. Kissinger) didn't know anything about it either. We had become pretty good buddies on this trip. We went to the Guam Naval Officers Club, and there was a big press conference there, and then out comes the Nixon Doctrine, or the Guam Doctrine, whatever you want. I was astonished. I thought, gee whiz, the internal defense of a country is up to that country itself, the United States will supply the equipment, but it's up to the country concerned to come up with a determination and the manpower to fight its own battles. We would defend, we said, against an external attack, period. Great! So that was another ground breaker for the Nixon administration. The other one being the decision to open up a contact with China, which I may have mentioned to you.

Q: That was in your book. Let's walk around a bit around the area. With the Philippines this Marcos regime was still held in some repute at that time?

HOLDRIDGE: That is correct. They had not gone into martial law. That came the following year in 1970. As far as we could tell, Marcos was a legitimate political candidate. The President, to give him credit, did make an effort to get ahold of Roxas. I remember seeing him in the elevator at the Intercontinental Hotel. The President had his office there. He would drive the hour or so through Philippine traffic to get over there and join us.

Q: Did you have much to do with the Philippines or was your plate pretty much full of other things?

HOLDRIDGE: Oh, I had something to do with the Philippines, yes. Trying to keep out of it as much as possible. It wasn't on this particular occasion but on another visit, I guess it was Al Haig in 1981. The next elections took place after Al Haig had been in Beijing in 1981, I was with him. I didn't want to hang around with George Bush (who would represent the US at the inauguration) or stick around the Philippines, so I left. George Bush was on his own. That's when he made that famous remark, “we love your democratic principles.” He was actually talking about ASEAN as a whole, but the press took the remark to mean the Philippines. By this time the Philippines had been under martial law, and the Marcoses were riding roughshod. Madame Marcos had celebrated the occasion of the inauguration by getting a chorus from the University of the Philippines that sang Handel's Messiah, the Hallelujah Chorus.(singing) For he shall reign forever and forever, hallelujah. I thought that was a little too much. That was the kind of thing a person...But anyway, getting back to the Nixon visit to the Philippines in 1969. I had tried to insulate the Nixons as much as I possibly could from Philippine politics, but Madame Marcos just took over. She dragged poor old Pat Nixon all over the place, to all of her favorite charities, this, that or the other orphanage, or God knows what else. Pat was utterly exhausted, and that evening there was a big black tie dinner at Malacanang Palace. The President got up and made his speech and thanks for all the hospitality. He said he'd learned one thing, though. With this very lovely lady, meaning Imelda, it's far better to be a friend of Imelda's than otherwise.

Q: During the time, up through '73 when you were with the NSC, was there any change in their attitude, from your perspective, towards the Philippines?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes. We decided that something had to be done and to try to encourage the Philippines toward a more democratic way of running their country. Thanks to Jack Froebe, a man on my staff who took this very seriously, I did write a memo to Kissinger talking about the errors Marcos was contemplating at this time, going into martial law. The least we could do, I thought, was talk him out of that one, which would have been a welcome sign of something, of restraint, on the side of the Philippine government. Henry would have none of it, said let them do what they want, that's okay as long as it keeps the area quiet and Marcos is working all right to keep the area quiet by his usual methods, Henry would have none of it. We did make an effort to stop martial law from coming into being. We, meaning my little corner of the NSC, recommended that we take steps to dissuade them from taking this fateful move, but to no avail.

Q: Still focusing on the Philippines, were you getting reports, consultations from the State Department on the situation?

HOLDRIDGE: Oh yes. We read all the cables coming in. Jim Wilson, I believe, was the charg# at the time. You might like to talk to him. I'm sure he burned himself out trying to make his voice understood or heard over the tumult. At the same time the Philippines were contributing a lot towards the effort in Vietnam. You may remember that there was in fact a Philippine Civil Affairs battalion there. They didn't do much in the way of fighting, but at least there was a presence on the ground. They were stalwart supporters of SEATO, which at that time was still in existence. So I guess we felt that we shouldn't really disturb the train of events, which seemed to be going more or less in our favor.

Q: Moving to another area in which you later became much more involved in, Indonesia, from your perspective in the NSC in this '69 to '73 period.

HOLDRIDGE: Well, I didn't really know too much about it. I had never been to Indonesia. I didn't get there until, my first visit came in 1968. Marshall Green was still ambassador. I really didn't know a great deal about what was going on in Indonesia except the coup d'etat had taken place, which dumped Sukarno and brought in Suharto, and things seemed to be looking up.

Q: It got rid of the Chinese and communist elements there.

HOLDRIDGE: Pat Derian went through and tore into President Suharto, which offended him deeply, for detention of some 30,000 communists. We stopped in Indonesia, of course, on the President's around the world trip. He and Suharto went in and had a little heart to heart talk by themselves, with only Suharto's interpreter present. This also happened in Bangkok. This shows you how little esteem the ambassador had in the eyes of the President. Frank Galbraith was the ambassador in Indonesia, and he thought he should sit in on the conversations between the two Presidents. No way. He was kept out and I think he was embittered by that. The same thing happened in Bangkok when Len Unger tried to get into the conversation that the President was having with, I guess it was Prime Minister Thanom at that time. A colleague of mine, Norm Hannah, who was the DCM, tried and tried and tried to persuade the NSC that Unger should sit in on that conversation. In doing so, he wrecked his career. Henry never forgave him for this constant beating on the door about getting Len Unger to sit in on the talks between the two principals, the President and the Prime Minister, unsuccessfully of course. Norm ended up as Consul General in Sydney. So it was really a kind of a tragic thing, that Norm overdid it. He never knew when to quit.

Q: On these trips were you informed or did it came by osmosis that the President didn't really care for the Foreign Service, didn't respect the Foreign Service or was this part of an overall plan or was this Kissinger keeping them away?

HOLDRIDGE: No, we were informed very definitely. I was informed, one of my jobs was to keep these guys from making nuisances out of themselves by trying to get the ambassadors in. Unfortunately, being a Foreign Service Officer I sympathized with the idea of the ambassador being present. I damn near killed myself, as a matter of fact, when we got to the Philippines. Marcos and Nixon were going to have a talk at Malacanang at two in the afternoon. So we on the airplane went through all the ceremonies, the guard of honor and all the rest. Then there was a motorcade, in which the NSC staff rode in a small bus and not in limousines. The NSC was always treated as a step-child by the rest of the White House staff. We were always sneered at as “the intellectuals” and seated below the salt if at all possible.

Q: This is Ehrlichman and Haldeman.

HOLDRIDGE: That's right. The famous group, all of whom ended up in the jug some years later. Anyway, the NSC staff ended up in a tour bus at the tail end of the procession. And as the procession went off the Philippine people were just overwhelmed by this. The place was just swarming with ordinary citizens. I don't know if this was spontaneous or generated or what. But somewhere along the boulevard, Roxas Boulevard, we were pinched off. Tony Lake and I had the bags, all these damn things to carry, and we couldn't move an inch. The Filipinos had a very short attention span, and they cleared the traffic enough for the cars and the limousines, but when this bus came along, forget it. So we had to hop out, grabbing our official bags, try to get a cab. We found one cab that got us fairly close to Malacanang. Then we ran into a place we couldn't cross. We had to take these bags and walk over a footbridge to the other side and catch another cab, perspiration dripping down our faces, and came galloping up to the entrance to the office wing of Malacanang about two minutes before two. I went charging with these doggone bags, only to be told that the President didn't want any notetaker present. I was supposed to be the notetaker. So we just sat there and cooled our heels. I sat talking to President Marcos's NSC guy, by the name of Menzi, who was a naturalized Filipino, (Menzies was

originally his name), who was a colonel in the Philippine Air Force without any wings. So we just sat there in the anteroom and chatted while the Presidents were inside. This was a very dangerous precedent that Nixon kept setting, because we never knew what went on between these respective top people. Of course, Marcos could have said anything that had been decided or accepted by Nixon, and we would have no means of refuting it.

Q: In a way, looking at this, you could see it's a dangerous form of government because at a certain point when principals meet it's not just they meet and make decisions. Things have to come out or it occurs in a absolute vacuum.

HOLDRIDGE: That's exactly right. We like to have the records, yet to the best of my knowledge I don't believe there were any records of the conversations Nixon had with Marcos, even Henry Kissinger wasn't in on that one. I think he was in on the talk that Len Unger had with Thanom in Thailand. It was one of those great lacunae, and it's a mistake.

Q: Did you find in the four years you were there a change in the attitude of the President or Kissinger or both towards, you may say, the professionals. I don't want to sound like I am a professional therefore everything has to be done by professionals because I don't believe that. At a certain point people have to carry out policy, and if you ignore the people who are paid to do it you run into problems. In the time you were there did you see any change?

HOLDRIDGE: Not really. I think the President remained fixed in his idea that the Foreign Service could not be trusted, it was full of leaks, that was one of the problems and besides, he felt they didn't have the imagination to adapt to new situations, and it went on all the way through. The secrecy of the President's China trip is a case in point, not the President's but Kissinger's China trip. By the time the President made the trip the State Department was clued in, but Bill Rogers was relegated to a rather lowly status. He was to discuss such things as claims versus assets and some of the practical matters between us. The high policy was all done with people who were on the NSC staff.

Q: Did you feel uncomfortable with this?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, of course I did. As I told you, I tried to keep as much in touch with Marshall Green as I could without getting myself thrown out the way I had to throw one of my assistants out.

Q: Turning to the other major power there, because I'm skirting around the whole China thing because of your book, what about Japan?

HOLDRIDGE: Japan was also an interesting problem for us, that Kissinger almost overlooked Japan for a long time. This is something he figured, I guess, let the Foreign Service professionals play around with. There wasn't anything that seemed to be too impossible or too difficult. Dick Sneider went off, as I mentioned before, to become a minister in charge of working out the reversion of Okinawa, then went on to become DCM. I guess Kissinger had enough respect for Dick to figure he could handle things. The ambassador, who in the dickens was the ambassador at the time, gosh, it couldn't have been Mike Mansfield, oh, yes, Bob Ingersoll was the ambassador. Anyway, Bob Ingersoll was a good Republican who had been appointed by the President, and I guess they figured it was all right. There didn't seem to be any problems except two things. One, the Nixon “shockus.” The first was the fact that the Japanese had not been given any hint whatsoever about the Kissinger visit, and that came as a real shock. The Japanese had always wanted to be the first of the western powers identified with the United States to establish a relationship with China. The fact that Kissinger had made an end run, that came as a bitter blow to then Prime Minister Sato. Then there was a big fight with Alex Johnson about how we should play this. The thought was, after the trip was over, to send Alex Johnson out to Japan to give a private briefing to Sato about what had transpired. But that never took place. I guess they thought that Sato still would have been obliged to go public with something.

Q: My understanding was that Johnson had been called to San Clemente to go out to tell it almost at the time the United States...

HOLDRIDGE: The idea was to be almost coincident with the time of the announcement, which came in the World Affairs Council speech the fifteenth of July, 1971, in which Nixon announced he would be going to China and that Kissinger had been there and so on. The idea was to send Alex Johnson out to give at least some degree of face to Sato, but I don't know who said nay to it. Alex never went. He did have the job of calling the Japanese ambassador from San Clemente to tell him about it and also spoke to the Chinese ambassador, the Republic of China ambassador.

Q: You were saying they had the job of telling them.

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, well that's about all the warning they got. About three or four hours ahead of time, actually I think the speech came off at 9:30 in the evening. That afternoon Alex and I were on the telephone. I remember talking to the Korean ambassador and the Philippine ambassador and so on. But Alex took upon himself as an old Japan hand to talk to the Japanese ambassador and also to James Shen, the Republic of China ambassador. It was the best we could have done under the circumstance I guess, but it was Henry, I believe, who had this great clamp down on any information coming out, so fearful of leaks.

Q: Did you have much experience with Japan? Was there much concern about what we might have been doing to Japan because there also was the other shocku...

HOLDRIDGE: The other shocku was the devaluation of the US dollar. That caught them by surprise. I think there was about a month or two in between the announcement of the Kissinger trip and the devaluation, which we didn't give them any advance notice about either. So our relationship was tough. We also had trade problems. At the time our balance of trade, of course, was unfavorable with Japan, but we were worried about more

mundane items such as textiles. We fought on textiles and then there was citrus fruit and then there was tobacco and things of that sort.

Q: I'm told that during the first meeting of Nixon with I guess Sato in Hawaii or something...

HOLDRIDGE: No, that was Tanaka and that took place in Oahu, in a hotel on the northern part of Oahu, the Kuilima.

Q: I have an interview with Dick Ericson who was the desk officer for Japan at the time saying that Nixon's major preoccupation with Japan was, the Republican southern strategy was getting the support of the southern states of the United States for the Republicans...

HOLDRIDGE: It was important for him on the textiles.

Q: This was his great interest and for Japanese this didn't ring very high.

HOLDRIDGE: So eventually we got the Japanese to agree on textiles. About that time we hit them, with the Nixon shocku two. The Americans were obviously concerned about the relationship with Japan. The Defense Department were very anxious to keep our Japanese friends happy with respect to our Mutual Defense Treaty. We used to have what we used to call the SSC, the Security Standing Committee or something like that, which would meet every year in Honolulu with the Japanese, and we would go over security matters. The Defense Department was very anxious to see the Japanese self-defense forces built up into something that was perhaps reasonable in terms of a counterweight to the Soviet Union, the navy in particular, and the air force. So this was one of the elements that we had to take into our calculus—the Japanese trade problem, the nature of the defense relationship and I was involved in that. In fact, I was also involved in trying to convince Kissinger that he should try to spend more time with Japan. People like Marshall Green and Alex Johnson kept saying, you should go to Japan and spend some time there, you overfly it all the time, you stop there on your way and you refuel and then you go on to China, and the Japanese are feeling hurt. They are a big country, an important country,

why don't you give them more attention? So eventually he finally did. On the way back from a trip to China Kissinger stopped for several days or a couple of days and met with the Keidanren and met with Ohira, by this time the Foreign Minister. I remember Henry saying, the man has teeth like a shark. Actually, Ohira turned out to be one of our best friends. I was really, truly, deeply moved when he died. I was very sorry. He was a good friend. Kissinger made all the rounds and saw the right people. We went to two geisha parties in one night, which I think is more than the traffic can bear.

Q: Oh yes. Did you feel that Kissinger really thought about Japan?

HOLDRIDGE: No. I don't believe he had any sense whatsoever of the way Japanese mentality worked, the kind of way one should deal with Japan. And of course, when he stopped there, the ambassador of Japan was Bob Ingersoll who went along on these little parties. But Bob was no great Japan hand himself. I didn't claim any particular background in Japanese although I was sensitive to the fact that the Japanese thought processes doesn't necessarily parallel our own. Actually, the Kissinger trip did help to clear things up. We made one trip by helicopter, since Prime Minister Tanaka was out of town. He was up at his golfing residence at Karuizawa. He had a villa right on the edge of the golf course. He was a tremendous golf addict. So we got on an Air Force helicopter and choppered all the way up there, some hundred odd miles or kilometers at any rate outside of Tokyo and dropped down in Tanaka's front lawn. It was more of a protocol meeting than anything else. There was very little you could discuss with a guy sitting in his golf clothes. Then we flew back. But Kissinger did touch base and that was helpful. And then again to make sure Tanaka was given the right treatment he was invited to a conference at Kuilima. This is in the northern part of Oahu we were talking about before. The main thing we wanted out of Japan at this time was home porting of a US carrier, which happened to be the Midway. Alex Johnson carried the load on this one. But we also wanted to talk about the debt: the unfavorable balance of trade between the United States and Japan, which had reached this astonishing level of three billion dollars. I had to draw up some of the position papers on this one. What we were hoping to do and the recommendation came from various

people including State was have Japan buy more wide body airplanes from us, which they could use, and buy more uranium or processed uranium, U235, and leave it in storage in the United States. These were just a couple of small measures that might help to ease the debt process, not to push us too hard on some of these trade issues that were floating around, see if we couldn't ease them off. Should I tell a little joke on Kissinger?

Q: Sure.

HOLDRIDGE: About this time a fly appeared in Kissinger's ointment known as Pete Peterson. A group was set up known as the CIEP, the Council on International Economic Policy. Now Kissinger always dismissed economics as being of any great importance. He was always interested in politics. And Fred Bergsten, Fred was in the office next to mine on the NSC, kept saying, “Henry you can't do that. You've got to take into account these economic matters because they are going to be important, and they will dictate many of our political decisions later on.” Well, Henry still didn't put up much of a fuss, and the next thing you know, here comes Pete Peterson with this CIEP on the other side of the Old Executive Building from us and sure enough Pete Peterson began to get in the way of Henry. I remember out at San Clemente we were discussing a SNIE, a Special National Intelligence Estimate, prepared by CIA on US-Japan relations. We thought it was important to maintain a good relationship between Japan and the US, but then here was this problem of how you were going to work it out with all of these little difficulties to be ironed out. Somewhere in this Pete Peterson made some kind of a crack, and Henry came back and said, “Well, I don't know I'm not an economist.” And Pete Peterson snapped back, “We know that Henry.” But Henry without blinking an eye said, “But at least I admit it.” So there was obviously no love lost between them.

Q: I'm thinking, here you are the Asian man. The President says, we want the stuff to come from you, that is the collective NSC. One of the ways traditional diplomacy or anybody who is dealing with countries work is that they have good contacts with the country in which they deal. The desk officers or something are always meeting with the

ambassadors from other countries, and they are getting input because it's not just how we feel but how the other countries will react. I mean it's a two way street. I mean this is not traditional diplomacy, but it's the way it works. In other word, it's not management completely from the top down, but there is input up and down. Now how did you as Mr. Asia operate? Did you go and talk to the people at the Japanese embassy?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, I had a considerable amount of contact with the Japanese ambassador and the Japanese minister. After some of the visits, for example when Sato came to the United States in the fall of 1969 it was determined that we were going to sign a treaty on the reversion of Okinawa to Japan we came out with a joint communiqu#. I went over to Blair House where the Japanese party was staying and sat with a Japanese gentleman, whose name I'm afraid I cannot recall, and we went over and worked out the wording for the joint communiqu#, nobody from State. Let's see what else. I did see quite a bit of some of the members of the Japanese embassy. Ambassador Okawara was a good friend of mine, and we used to have lunch quite often or dinner or something like that. We saw each other socially, so I knew the people in the Japanese embassy. I knew very few people in Japan. The Japanese worked out this trip which Kissinger ultimately took to try to give Kissinger the maximum exposure to the appropriate people such as Keidanren, Japanese Association of Manufacturers. The big Daihatsu types and so on. A lot of what we did was via asking the State Department for advice. Who should he see?

Q: What about on the NSC as during the Nixon time, power for foreign affairs was very definite with the NSC or until Kissinger moved over to State. How did the other countries who had embassies here react to this because embassies are supposed to go to where power is in order to talk.

HOLDRIDGE: Well, they did.

Q: How did that work?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, they came to see me rather than go over to the guys in State. For example, the ambassador of Indonesia, there was one time when the Indonesians were very concerned about the United States selling tin from our stock pile, rubber as well. These are two of the principal export commodities of Indonesia. So rather than go over and talk to the Department of State, they made an appointment with me and came over and talked to me. The ambassador come and sat in my office, and I said I would do what I could for him. I also did their military attach# another favor. There were some US warships that were coming up on the surplus list, and the Indonesians were interested. I managed to get those warships for the Indonesians free of charge. The military attach#, who is now the Coordinating Minister for Polcom, Politics and Security, in Indonesia, has never forgotten it.

Q: What about the other power in the whole Asian area, Australia and New Zealand? How did you deal with them?

HOLDRIDGE: The way we dealt with them was just in fact to keep in touch with them and hold their hands. I saw quite a bit of the Australians and the New Zealanders, regarded them as friends and allies. At that point, there were no differences between us over this whole nuclear issue as concerns New Zealand, and they had been doing their bit in the Vietnam operation. There was a Commonwealth brigade, I believe, somewhere in the central part, somewhere near Da Nang. You were there.

Q: I know there were some Australians near, it was called Vung Tau, the old Cape Sanshang between Saigon and the sea and they may have been somewhere else, too.

HOLDRIDGE: Well, the New Zealanders had an artillery battery. Vietnam was such a feature of our policy that as long as these countries were cooperative in keeping their flags flying we didn't want to roil the political waters any. We kept in touch with them. I didn't really visit New Zealand or Australia until I became Assistant Secretary of State. Actually

when I was NIO, I attended an intelligence conference in Canberra and flew out there. And I did fly through on other occasions, but nothing of substantial importance.

Q: Because of the China opening did you become involved with Taiwan?

HOLDRIDGE: Of course I became involved with Taiwan. Indeed, more than I really cared to. I mentioned keeping in touch with a Republic of China ambassador, James Shan. When we got back, Kissinger attended a dinner at the Chinese embassy residence. I described that in the book that's already been published.

Q: Is that any input at all from the academic world?

HOLDRIDGE: Kissinger hated the academic world. To a man they thought he had betrayed their cause by standing up for Vietnam. I remember one session he had. He had a whole bunch of his old colleagues from Harvard or maybe some others that had interfaced with him over the years. They sat there in the conference, the situation room, and Henry was just ripped to shreds from these people for betraying “ideals of the American people.” He never forgave them. And of course, when he finished up his stint as the NSC advisor and also as Secretary of State, he was denied reaccess to Harvard. He did not get his tenure back. He never has forgiven them. So he has very little use for the academics.

Q: Did you find them at all useful?

HOLDRIDGE: No. I had an academic working for me, Dick Solomon. Dick was one of these guys who was practical minded, and he has managed to jump from one of those government jobs to another ever since. He's now the head of the Institute of Peace. He was Assistant Secretary of State for a while under the previous administration under George Bush. He was the exception that proved the rule. The rest of them. I remember, to give you a little episode on this, not too long after we got back from the around the world trip in 1969, Kissinger asked Allen Whiting, an academic to come in to talk to him

about the possibility of the Soviets attacking the Chinese. Allen was at this time at the University of Michigan. This was after the episode along the Ussuri River in March 1969. About that time the Soviets had began to talk belligerently and began to build up their armed forces. So Kissinger asked Allen in, and Allen had written this book called China Crosses the Yalu, which I've already mentioned. Indeed, what he foresaw was if the United States stiffened up with respect to Vietnam, and this is what concerned Henry, the US and Vietnam, we would find ourselves engaged in a war with China. Kissinger asked me, I sat in on this conversation, what I thought. I said, well I thought that maybe they were considering it, but I don't think they have made any decision. I said, I think the Soviets would be appalled at the magnitude of the situation which would develop if they got into a war with China, with all that territory and all those thousands, hundreds, well at that time hundreds of millions of Chinese people to worry about. So I said, I think they are going to be very careful about what kind of decision they make. So that's the only time that I ever knew that Kissinger consulted with an academic. I thought that Allen Whiting was way off base. As a matter of fact, just between the two of us and whoever listens to these tapes later on, I think that Allen Whiting is one of the architects of the US problems in Vietnam. The Yalu Syndrome I call it. China crosses the Yalu. Allen was convinced that if the United States became very heavily involved in Vietnam and got up close to the Chinese, the Chinese would come pouring by the hundreds of thousands, and we would become involved in a major land war with China. Well, Allen did not take much time to scrutinize what was happening in China at the time. China was just recovering from The Great Leap Forward, which had ripped its economy to shreds and done terrible things to the fighting capabilities to the People's Liberation Army. Now it was embarked on something even more horrendous, which was the Cultural Revolution. The military was eventually forced to take over the operation of many industries and many aspects of the Chinese economy to keep the whole thing from falling apart. China was in no position to do anything other than send some unacknowledged engineer line of communication troops with some anti-aircraft guns into Laos and eventually into Vietnam to help the Vietnamese out. But they never acknowledged this publicly. Allen was concerned about hundreds of millions of Chinese

swarming across the border. Averell Harriman was the Assistant Secretary of State at the time, and Allen convinced Ave of the threat of China. Ave in turn convinced Dean Rusk and Dean Rusk in turn convinced President Johnson. Therefore we laid off of hitting hard targets. I've just been reading a book incidentally. You've got to read it, it's fascinating, about how the armed forces transformed themselves after Vietnam into something that was able to do a masterpiece in Iraq. It's called Prodigal Soldiers by James Kitfield. It is really an account of the terrible situation affecting the armed forces at the conclusion of the Vietnam War and all of the struggles various people had to make in order to overcome mindsets that had brought about our problems in Vietnam and eventually how the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force began to shape up into something of a much more effective and integrated organization. By integration I don't mean racial but I mean in terms of cooperation, one service versus another.

Q: We are talking about the Soviets, too. Did the fact that the Soviets would not give up their so- called little islands ...those islands up to the north.

HOLDRIDGE: North between Hokkaido and the southern tip of Sakhalin.

Q: Were you as the Asian hand sort of sitting there saying, thank God that the Soviets are so obdurate about this? It kept the Soviets from opening up any type of cooperative arrangement with the Japanese?

HOLDRIDGE: Oh absolutely. The fact that we allowed Okinawa to revert to Japanese control and the Soviets sat on these tiny little pieces of land and refused to give up these islands, the northern territories so-called, made our life much simpler. And you know the Soviets were good friends of ours in one respect, they were so damn predictable. For all these many years we could always expect the same kind of hard line from the Soviets and that meant that everyone else understood this well, and the United States could exercise its leadership with relative freedom. Of course, now that the Soviets don't exist anymore

and you have a Russia and a different circumstance everywhere in the world, this makes things a little irrelevant to what is happening.

Q: How were things during the Okinawa reversion? Were things, by the time you had arrived, pretty well on course?

HOLDRIDGE: Pretty much except for Governor Yara. The problem with Japan is that the United States to this day still occupies 40% or maybe even more of it. I'm not sure, I'd have to ask my daughter whose husband was stationed in Okinawa. She was with him, and they have just gotten back. He's retired. Anyway, very substantial chunks of Okinawa are still under US government control, and the Japanese would like it back, the Okinawans. There is a distinction between Okinawans and Japanese, by the way.

(Taped stopped and then restarted.)

HOLDRIDGE: Today I'm 71. How old are you Stuart?

Q: 67.

HOLDRIDGE: 67, you are a young man.

Q: We were talking about Okinawa and the reversion. What role did the NSC play during your period of time there?

HOLDRIDGE: Very little, frankly. We left that in the hands of capable people such as Dick Sneider and the Japanese who worked it out as long as we had access to the base facilities, which we regarded as important. In fact, Okinawa then and now has the sole US reserve force in the Pacific area. Ground force, air force, navy, whatever. Except for what we have in Korea, and that, of course, is otherwise occupied for a good part of the time.

Q: Talking about Dick Sneider, he was my ambassador in Korea at one part, a man I had great respect for. He was a very tough guy.

HOLDRIDGE: Tough, that's absolutely right.

Q: Unfortunately he died before I could get around and interview him. I am told he really played a very major role in this Okinawa reversion which was not an easy job at all.

HOLDRIDGE: Fortunately, Dick was tough-minded, very capable individual, extremely intelligent, but he also understood the Japanese. I don't think I could have done the job Dick did with the Japanese. They are a law onto themselves.

Q: I have a feeling that Henry Kissinger sort of just didn't want to bother to get too involved with the Japanese.

HOLDRIDGE: That is correct. That as long as things seem to be going the way we wanted with these SSC meetings every year, and the Defense Department being reasonably happy with what was going on and as long as our other problems on trade import of Japanese textiles and whatever were being handled adequately, he felt that there was nothing that really concerned him, this was not a crisis area.

Q: What was your impression, again during the time you were in the NSC, of President Nixon and his dealing with foreign policy in relationship with Kissinger?

HOLDRIDGE: It was complex. I would say Kissinger was deeply respected by the President, I think, for his intellectual capabilities. But I recall, I guess it was 1969, there was a photograph of Thanksgiving at the Western White House at San Clemente. Here were the Nixons with the people who were invited in to have Thanksgiving dinner, and Bob Haldeman, Ehrlichman, those two principally, and some other people from the White House staff, all more or less informally dressed. And here was Kissinger looking very German with a coat and a tie and with kind of a frozen expression on his face, and I thought, my God, the sort of unlikeliest guest...I'm sure Nixon respected Kissinger, but the respect did not necessarily mean a warm and intimate friendship. The way we were treated in the NSC, as I told you, like the poor relations, sneered at as the intellectuals

etc., suggests that if there had been a warmer personal relationship between Kissinger and Nixon we would have been a little better off.

Q: You didn't really feel like you were part of the White House team, in a way?

HOLDRIDGE: Not really.

Q: There was this sort of California mafia or whatever you want to call it.

HOLDRIDGE: I got to see more of Nixon than maybe a lot of others did. Of course, inevitably, a great number of important personages would come through Washington from my part of the world. It was beneath Kissinger's dignity to sit in on conversations these people would have with the President, other than those at the very top. The President was a very patient man, really, and he would be willing to meet with lesser officials such as foreign ministers. Dwight Chapin, the fellow who made the appointments, would schedule them, and we would sit down and we would discuss. The President would discuss whatever these people wanted to talk about. Holy smokes, I remember the Prime Minister of New Zealand came in and bored the President for about an hour and a half on meat exports. I learned more about manufacturing grade meat than I ever cared to know, and I'm sure it was true about Nixon, too. Anyway, Kissinger wouldn't sit in on these things, beneath his dignity, so he would ask me to do it. And I have heard Nixon on many occasions, and he got to know me pretty well.

Q: As Vice President, when Nixon was touring around and even when he left office, although the Foreign Service obviously never warmed up to Nixon, from my interviews, there was a real respect for him. He learned his brief, he obviously knew things, so there was a professional feeling of respect out of the Foreign Service, those who came across him.

HOLDRIDGE: Well, in some cases, yes. I've often wondered why it was that Nixon had such a dim view of the Foreign Service. I think some Foreign Service posts gave him a

pretty cold shoulder when he was out of office. He came through Hong Kong when I was there. This goes back to the 60s. When did he leave office?

Q: He left in '61.

HOLDRIDGE: All right. He came through about '62 or '63. We turned out the American community for him at the American Club, and people who wanted to shake his hand came. The place was crowded, we gave him briefings and we really threw out the red carpet for him. But not every Foreign Service post did that. Maybe you haven't talked to everybody, but I have a hunch that maybe one of the reasons he was anti-Foreign Service was that some places treated him pretty coldly. He was just an ejected cartridge.

Q: We have skirted around China because I'm going under the assumption this was covered in your book. Now were there any other areas we might talk about in the NSC that we haven't hit?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, the relationship with Thailand. We've talked a little bit about that. The President stopping there and being hosted by His Majesty, the King, a great honor. And the fact that we went out of our way to be nice to Thailand because the Thai were being good to us. They sent a regimental combat team, the so-called Black Panthers, to begin with, and that didn't sound so good when they found out what the Black Panthers were in the United States...

Q: Which is an extreme African-American movement of that period.

HOLDRIDGE: That's right, exactly. I think they were renamed the Black Leopards. Anyway, they had done their job and they had supplied these SGUs, Special Guerrilla Units. There was one little episode there that showed the discrepancy between the State Department and the National Security Council. And that was the SGUs had done such a good job that in the later part of the US role in Cambodia, this gets you into 1972, one unfortunate thing happened in Cambodia, and that was Lon Nol. He had a heart attack

and we had sent him off to Trippler in Hawaii to recover. During his absence he was replaced by his vice president or deputy, a very fine gentleman named Sirik Matak. Sirik Matak was a general, but he was also an honorable military man. He fought the good fight. We brought in, to help him out, Khmer Khrom. These were people of Cambodian Khmer descent who had lived in Indochina and the French side over there in South Vietnam, but who were esteemed as being very good fighters. We recruited them or had them recruited and brought in to help out Sirik Matak and by gosh, they fought well. Things were looking up pretty well. Route 5 to the north of the Tonle Sap was open all the way over to Battambang, and so on. But then Lon Nol comes back and things begin to deteriorate. His brother Lon Non was also a general and was probably engaged in the opium trade and all sorts of other sordid activities. So the military situation in Cambodia began to disintegrate. The Thai forces had done such a good job in a defensive role in Laos that Henry, I guess, had got the idea, well why don't we bring in some of these Thai forces into Cambodia. In fact, I think they may have been one of those SGUs up in the northernmost section of Cambodia, right close to the southernmost border of Laos along the Mekong. Be that as it may, the thought was to “sheepdip” an entire Thai regiment and put it over in the vicinity of Battambang to keep the Vietnamese away from that little corner of the woods. Alex Johnson and Marshall Green, had reluctantly gone along with increasing Thai involvement in Laos with the SGU, but the idea of introducing Thai forces, not volunteers, in this case it would have been a regular regiment, sheepdipped as we said, wearing Cambodian uniforms to go into Cambodia, that was beyond what they could really stomach. So they dragged their feet on that. And they found one objection after another, one reason why it had to be postponed, the decision was put off and put off. Eventually the whole idea died because events overtook us, that is the collapse of the Cambodian resistance against the Vietnamese and the Khmer Rouge was of such a rapid nature, and Congress not voting appropriations for ammunition for the coming fiscal year, and so on, all of that made this whole effort look rather puny. The Thai wouldn't have come in under those circumstances anyway if they didn't think the US government was solidly behind the whole Cambodian episode. So Marshall and Alex managed to spike that one. I mentioned a

Chiefs of Mission meeting I attended, I believe it was 1971, not '70, which I went to Baguio and I can remember that they were giving winks and nods to each other on this whole episode. It didn't help Marshall out much with his relationship with Henry. I don't think there was any love lost between Henry and Marshall thereafter, although Marshall was respected by Henry. It was not anywhere near the type of relationship that had existed prior to that time, unfortunately.

Q: How about one last place, Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew? Was that just a small blip on our radar or was that a problem?

HOLDRIDGE: It was a problem in only one respect. Lee Kuan Yew was definitely the comer and had in fact become the prime minister of the State of Singapore, which was the only state in the whole world, as I say to my Singapore friends, which got its independence from being kicked out of someone else's country. I passed through Singapore in 1965, I guess I was on a trip. Maybe I had been, I can't recall what precisely it was that had taken me there. It was 1965. Lee Kuan Yew had just made a speech in which he talked about a “noncommunal” Malaysia. Singapore had become a part of Malaysia. The British had worked this out so that there would be some kind of equal status or equal population, the Malays versus the Chinese versus whatever other people around, the Kadazans, and God knows what all. People in Sarawak including Dyaks and what have you. Lee Kuan Yew wanted a noncommunal Malaysia, which meant that he, Lee Kuan Yew, a Chinese, could compete on an equal footing within the politics of Malaysia, in the capital at that time, Kuala Lumpur. That would have meant the Malays could have been outvoted because the Chinese are far more active politically. I think in terms of population they even have a slight edge over everybody else. As a consequence of that, Lee Kuan Yew got kicked out. Lee Kuan Yew and Singapore got kicked out of Malaysia.

Q: Was this on your watch in the NSC?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, this was partly during my NSC time and partly when I was in INR. But Singapore had done its bit. It had contributed forces to fight the Indonesians during the “Confrontasi” with Indonesia, and so on. But now it was having to go on its own, and all I can say it seems to be doing all right. I went through there on a trip and got out to watch the Jurong development begun in 1969. Under Lee Kuan Yew, a man who showed undoubted leadership characteristics, it seemed to be doing all right. I didn't see anything in particular that we should get concerned about other than its relationships with other countries. There was tension between Malaysia and Singapore after Singapore became independent. They weren't of any great consequence.

Q: When you left the NSC in 1973, one of the reasons why we were in Vietnam was the so-called “domino theory”, if Vietnam goes the other countries will start to fall apart. I think maybe at the time, I don't think this was a completely invalid theory in 1973, things had changed. How did you view Asia in 1973 when you left that particular responsibility?

HOLDRIDGE: My own feeling was that regardless of how we ourselves in the United States came out of Vietnam, the purpose that we had set out to achieve had been accomplished. And of course, later on when I was Ambassador to Singapore, this is one of the things that Lee Kuan Yew used to talk to me about. “You did what you were supposed to do, you gave us time” he said, “for us to get our own houses in order in our own way and to develop our own institutions to the point where they became stable enough to withstand the threat of internal subversion, or external [subversion].” They always took for granted the fact that the U.S. was going to be around in that part of the world. Vietnam was a plus for the Asian countries around the periphery.

Q: I think this is one of the things that Americans seem to forget. We say “Well, we lost the war in Vietnam, hence we shouldn't have been there”, but there were a lot of things that could have happened if we had not been there that (maybe we did it improperly) but things grew out of that which came into our favor.

HOLDRIDGE: Exactly. I couldn't agree with you more, Stuart. I think that of course we did do things improperly. I think that I've already touched upon the fact that we really didn't try our hand at letting the Vietnamese “run their own show”. We didn't let them develop a sense of national cohesion and national political strength. We tried to do everything for them until it was in effect, too late. The book that I've got here, “Prodigal Soldiers”, talks about the great change that took place in Vietnam after General Abrams became the Chief of MACV, and before that Westmoreland never had a clue, he never had a clue. Westy was a typical “foot slogging” soldier who did everything by the book.

Q: He was an artillery man.

HOLDRIDGE: Well, whatever he was, I was an artillery man myself.

Q: I know, that's why I say it. [laughing]

HOLDRIDGE: Anyway, Westy was not the man for the task, and Abrams understood far better what the real job was. But regardless of how we came out of Vietnam we did stabilize that area. Now some of the trends have not been all that great. We were unhappy about what happened in the Marcos Administration toward the end of it and certainly there are other problems of insurrection or instability. But Korea has been stable, the Japanese have stayed more or less aligned with the U.S., except on trade matters, surely. The Philippines, doing a better job now under a West Point graduate than they did under Corazon Aquino. Indonesia is not doing all that badly, it's doing quite well, thank you. Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, economically, are all doing quite well. Burma is even beginning to come back into the light. Vietnam itself, is going through some fascinating changes. So all of this would probably never have happened had the United States not spent those six agonizing years, or seven agonizing years in Vietnam.

Q: I keep having a last question, but this really is the last question on this area. What about Burma, did Burma cross your radar at all?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, indeed it did. Narcotics was one of our big problems in Thailand, and narcotics was our big problem in Burma. Much of the opium that was translated into heroin in laboratories along the Thai-Burmese border and then shipped by caravan down into Thailand and exported, was raised in the Shan states of Burma. So we worked out an assistance program with the Burmese. We supplied them with helicopters for spraying weed-killer on opium plants, and we gave them advice from the DEA people. We tried crop substitution and things like that. We even had a road project going in Burma. We tried to keep Burma more or less on the straight and narrow, despite the fact that it was a hopelessly run country, dictatorial. Ne Win was not exactly nature's nobleman, and he continued to run that country into the ground for quite awhile. He's still around and I guess maybe he's looking over the shoulder of the SLORC, the State Law and Order Restoration Committee.

Q: All right, well why don't we call it quits at this point.

HOLDRIDGE: Okay Stuart.

Q: You left in 1973, what did you do?

HOLDRIDGE: After 1973 I went to Beijing as the Deputy Chief of the U.S. Liaison Office there under David Bruce, side by side with another Deputy Chief, Al Jenkins from State.

Q: Okay, well we'll talk about that next time.

HOLDRIDGE: Okay.

Q: Today is October 27, 1995. So we're off to China, now it seems like there are two, what I would call DCMs or something.

HOLDRIDGE: It was a very odd arrangement.

Q: Could you explain that?

HOLDRIDGE: The reason being that I went more or less to represent the White House. I was supposed to keep my eye, presumably, on what the Department of State was up to and how Al Jenkins represented the Department of State. It was a very unorthodox arrangement, but because both of us were sensible people we managed to make it work pretty well.

Q: Was this Henry Kissinger?

HOLDRIDGE: It was Henry Kissinger.

Q: It sounds like this guy couldn't let go in a way. How was it explained to you and to Jenkins and to Bruce?

HOLDRIDGE: We were just told that this was what was going to be and I guess Henry [Kissinger] expected that we would understand and go along with it.

Q: The DCM is basically the chief executive officer, counselor, or whatever you want to call it. Who was the executive officer?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, we kind of divided it. Al had the larger office than I did, but on the other hand as time went on, it proved that I seemed to be much more involved in the operations than Al was. Al is sort of a semi-mystic, and this is not disparaging him in any way. He for a time was on the board of Maharishi College out there in Nebraska, was a great believer in transcendental meditation, and he would come to the office in the morning and close his office door and he would meditate. Meanwhile, life had to go on. [laughing]

I was very close to David Bruce and we would get these phone calls from the Chinese Foreign Ministry fairly often in the earlier days, at any rate it was said that “So and so wants to see you,” and we would say “What for?” and they would say “Something involving

the liaison office." This would be from the Chinese, and we could never find out what is was beforehand they wanted to "zap" us for, that's when it usually hit us between the eyes that it was something about our conduct or our behavior or misbehavior, and I found myself much more involved with that than Al was. I usually went along with David Bruce when he went, or very frequently, I went by myself, taking Don Anderson along. I could understand what the Chinese were saying but it's always a good trick in diplomacy to work through a interpreter, it gives you time to think.

Q: We'll come back to what they were "zapping" you for. You arrived there when?

HOLDRIDGE: I got there about the middle of May, 1973.

Q: What was the situation of the Liaison Office, the physical setting and what was the Liaison Office?

HOLDRIDGE: Well at that time, the Chinese had very kindly (they were very anxious to get us started, this was Zhou En-lai's personal intercession, I believe). They had under construction, a compound for some other soon-to-be-arriving-in-Beijing mission. They took it over for us. We brought along, actually acquired after we got there a group, of Sea Bees who took over the communications unit and put in the kind of extra safeguards which we believed were necessary. This involved chopping holes in the wall and putting in enormous steel bars and making sure that it was secure. All this was going on while we were moving in. The construction was on the actual grounds of what was to be the U.S. Liaison Office, so we had to set up shop in the Beijing Fan Dian, the Peking Hotel. I had a room, a suite, and Al had something like it—actually I think the Jenkins' were fortunate in that they got into the "nine story building," the Chinese reserved portions of the large apartment building in the diplomatic area to the north and the west of the center of town, the San Li Tun Area they called it, for diplomats coming on board. If there is a new mission in town, the mission will get a floor. On one side would be the office section and on the other side would be the residence of the Chief of Mission. Well they had Al Jenkins, I believe fairly well taken

care of down in one of the lower floors just under where the Bruces were, and I myself was there in the Beijing Fan Dian. along with everybody else in the Embassy.

Q: How big was the, I keep calling it an Embassy, but for the transcriber call it the Liaison Unit?

HOLDRIDGE: There were about 26 people altogether.

Q: What type of offices did you have in the beginning?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, we didn't really have much of anything except we were all squeezed into the office section of a floor of the nine story building, so-called. Which was the office part, or it could be a residential part. As a matter of fact, it was across the floor of the same entryway from David Bruce's place. So in there went the code machines and we all sort of sat on each others laps and desks and so on, pending the completion of our final building. I can remember very well, one of the first issues we had to confront was the question of whether the Marines who would be on our security staff would wear uniforms or not. A number of us had reservations about uniforms because the Chinese under the Communists, we thought, would not take kindly to the reappearance of an organized military foreign force in their country.

Q: We had of course a regiment of Marines there for years.

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, well that was one of the rankling things to the Chinese. It was colonialism, so we were concerned about the reaction if the Marines were to wear uniforms. It turned out later justifiably so. I can remember sitting there and drafting a cable in this office section, going back to the Department but actually aimed at the Commandant of the Marine Corps, bringing up the problem and saying do you really want the Marines to wear uniforms? And the answer came back from the Commandant ratified by the dear Department “Yes we do.” So the Marines, when we got set up, were to wear uniforms. They didn't want to wear them when we were in the temporary building, we didn't have

a flag in front and we didn't have all of the necessary equipment, including a secure conference room and things like that. We made do until the completion of the compound, which we moved into about the first of July, 1973.

Q: Talking about the compound, there was a great scandal or "cause celebre" about our building of the new Embassy in Moscow about this time. Henry Kissinger had pushed for it rather strongly and it went through and it was absolutely riddled with spy devices. I think they had to rip the whole thing down or something like that. But it was never really occupied. This is sort of the same time and same type of government, how does that...?

HOLDRIDGE: Well we figured that anything we said which was not in the "bubble" would be compromised. And in fact, somebody was fooling around with the steam pipes that came in. All of the buildings in that area were heated from a central heating plant up on the northwestern quadrant of Beijing, sort of toward the road to the airport; and we had some problems with the heat and somebody found a trap door and went down into it and, lo and behold, here was this trap door that led to a passageway that went off into the distance, which we assumed could have been used to monitor close-up conversations within the Liaison Office.

Q: How do you deal with that sort of thing?

HOLDRIDGE: We just sealed it shut and proceeded to go about our business. The problem being that we were new in China, the Chinese were new to us and consequently we didn't want to "roil the waters" too much, to make a big issue. I don't believe we ever told the Chinese about the existence of the tunnel which we discovered.

Q: David Bruce certainly during our era, our most distinguished Ambassador, started out as a Foreign Service Officer back in Versailles Treaty times, didn't he?

HOLDRIDGE: Well he was certainly very much involved in many of the things. He was Ambassador to the Court of St. James, Ambassador to France.

Q: Bonn?

HOLDRIDGE: Bonn, and had a distinguished career. I really wouldn't think he would have been an FSO.

Q: I think he was an FSO for a very, very short period of time.

HOLDRIDGE: A very short period of time, but he was a political appointee. Far be it from me to point fingers at political appointees, unless they don't measure up to the kinds of standards which one would expect. He was a fine man and he did a fine job, and one of the reasons that he was picked is that the Chinese respect age. Most of their people, Mao Zedong at that time, was in his seventies. David Bruce, I think, was seventy-three when he showed up there. Here I am approaching that age and I don't feel old. [laughter] David had his problems with his feet. I'm not wearing these slippers because I'm like David Bruce. He found it very difficult to walk because of bunions and things like that. He made the egregious error of going to a Chinese podiatrist, or native foot doctor, and had some work done on his feet, after which it was worse rather than better and he always wore Chinese shoes, soft felt shoes.

Q: How did he manage the Embassy? He'd obviously been around a long time so he knew what an Embassy did and he'd been in places where he'd had huge support staff so he could pretty well turn it over. How did he do it?

HOLDRIDGE: Well the way he worked it was, I suppose, the way any intelligent person would act. He had a chance to review all of the people who were being chosen to fill the post there, and I think the way that David managed things was to allow people that he had confidence in, after looking their records over, to do their thing. He would sit up at the top and we had a staff meeting everyday and we would go over the issues and he would make a decision as to what we would do but he would listen to all of those involved and then come up with whatever decision was required. He also had with him Brunson McKinley, a

personal aide, whom I've lost sight of. I have no idea where Brunson is now. He went off to Da Nang and Vietnam just before the collapse of the South Vietnamese in 1975 and I saw pictures of him wearing a steel helmet on the deck of an aircraft carrier when they were evacuating people from Da Nang and I haven't a clue where he is now. But he was a bright officer and sort of the amanuensis, if you will, of David Bruce. And often relaying things from David to us, and we would relay things to David through Brunson.

Q: You were there from when to when?

HOLDRIDGE: May 1973 to June 1975.

Q: When you arrived there, what did you see the main issues were going to be?

HOLDRIDGE: Trying to keep the relationship with the United States on an even track. Make sure that the Shanghai communique worked out all right. We were almost immediately in the business of authorizing visas for Chinese to come to the United States to study or to make various kinds of visits. We issued many visas in that regard, starting from the word go. At the same time we had some problems that we wished to discuss with the Chinese. One that occupied a lot of my attention was the exhibition of Chinese artifacts which appeared eventually in Washington at the Smithsonian. That exhibition had been sent around to various and sundry places in the world and the Chinese had worked out an agreement, a draft agreement, for each respective country on how it was to be handled and treated. Of course, the Department of State, being the Department of State, when we sent the draft agreement in to the dear Department the lawyers crawled over it like lice and decided that we didn't have enough safeguards for the United States. So they came back with some suggested revisions which toughened it up in terms of our side of the agreement, which the Chinese didn't like at all. So they toughened it up on their side of the agreement and we went back and forth like a tennis game for over a month on that situation. Eventually I came to the conclusion that if we wanted that exhibition at all, we were jolly well going to have to get it on Chinese terms. I thought it would be a

gross mistake to not receive the exhibition which had been highly popular in other places in Europe where it had gone. I think it was in Vienna, Paris, London, probably at the British Museum and so on. So this was my recommendation and eventually we did get the exhibition off to the U.S. on Chinese terms. That was the kind of thing that we had to deal with.

Q: What about visas? I'm an old visa officer and there's always the problem of membership and prohibited organizations. Just about everything in China would be prohibited. How did you work that out?

HOLDRIDGE: Well we politely ignored it. Actually we did have one little crisis. One day the phone rings and here was Zhao Jia, a young lady who was in the Foreign Ministry in the Americas Division, saying that Mr. so and so who was the Deputy Director of the Consular Division of the Foreign Ministry, wanted to see me. I didn't know what he had in mind, I was completely blank, but I went off. I took Don Anderson with me.

Q: Who was your consular officer?

HOLDRIDGE: We had Bob Blackburn who was both the Administrative Officer and the Consular Officer. We combined because of personnel limitations. So up I went, and I immediately got hit by the Deputy Director of the Consular Division over the fact that the Liaison Office had taken the standard form, which people interested in getting visas for the United States would receive upon application, either personally or through the mail. As you suggested, one of these paragraphs talks about those who are ineligible. Ineligibles included prostitutes, people of low moral repute and members of communist parties. What had happened was that our consular officer, Bob Blackburn who was not a Chinese language officer and had no background in China had simply taken this form and given to the interpreter translators we had received from the Diplomatic Services Bureau of Beijing Municipality, whom we assumed, of course reported to the authorities in China. These people had dually translated the form and then we sent it to the People's

Publishing House to be printed. We didn't, Bob Blackburn did. I was completely unaware of what had been going on. When I went over to see the Deputy Director of Consular Division, I was astonished to find that the workers of the People's Publishing House had objected strenuously to this little bit about denial of visas to those who were members of the Communist Party. Did I not know the Primer Zhou En-lai was a member of the Communist Party? Would he be denied entry to the United States? What about Chairman Mao? I thought that this was the time to be abject, I apologized profusely and said that unfortunately those of us on the second floor of the Liaison Office, those who were the Chinese speaking staff among the Americans, had not had a chance to review this, and I was very sorry and I would inform my government. “Please accept my personal apologies on this and we will take steps that this will not happen again.” That little thing blew over and we just politely ignored that little section. And anybody who came in with a Chinese government cachet to receive a visa got one.

Q: I would think under the law, you would of had to have had, the equivalent of a blanket waiver or something.

HOLDRIDGE: Well what we did was, as I said, we informed the Department and said that we proposed to ignore this section unless you say otherwise. And we never got anything back. That was no way to begin a relationship, or to maintain one. Of course, there is a loss of institutional memories in the Department of State, something which disturbs me greatly. When I left, Al Jenkins had left six or eight months before I did. I think he found China not up to his expectations because he was a great believer in person to person contact and in China there were no person to person contacts.

Q: I was in the Senior Seminar from 1974 to 1975 and he came and addressed us and that's what he said. Everybody said “That must have been exciting.” and he said “No. It was very dull and I really didn't like it.”

HOLDRIDGE: He didn't like it and I thought that this was peculiar, because people had to understand that we were a little island of Americans in a sea of Chinese and we had to in effect, adapt ourselves. If we didn't adapt, we shouldn't be there. Al did find it difficult. He had been consul in Tianjin after World War II, before we lost all of our diplomatic contacts, and consequently he took it very seriously. I think he brooded about it, this lack of contact with Chinese. Somewhere about the second year we were there he decided to retire. On the question of the little form where people requesting visas or information on visas, darned if we didn't do it again. After I'd gone, and I'd really chewed Bob Blackburn up and down for not letting us know about this little episode and how it had generated, he left and I left and the new Consular/Administrative Officer did the same thing all over again.

Q: In some ways this oral history that we're doing we hope will become a circuit of institutional memory. Talking about visa matters and people matters, were you monitoring or looking where these Chinese students were going? Did they seem to be headed towards the equivalent of nuclear research or something like that?

HOLDRIDGE: No, it was my impression that it was not nearly that esoteric. They would be going to Harvard or they would be going to U.C. Berkeley or something like that. Of course, their whole idea was to move more vigorously into the physical sciences, but they had delegations who just went to visit various parts of the United States or meet with American officials in Washington or in State capitals. It was not what we considered clearly an open circuit for espionage.

Q: As a matter of fact, at one point I was a State Department Liaison Officer for Immigration Service and looking at this everyday there would be a huge stack of applications coming to INS, they had to get a waiver, which came automatically with Chinese students going all over the place. I had the feeling that if anything subversive was happening, it was the fact that we were loading China up with their citizens who were

going to be favorably inclined towards the United States through this program. I mean this huge mass of people coming over.

HOLDRIDGE: We anticipated that there might be a certain amount of looking around, especially after the Chinese managed to, in addition to opening up their Liaison Office in Washington, travel fairly extensively to places like Houston or the west coast or Chicago, places like that. But we thought that the U.S. security system ought to be able to cope with that. As a matter of fact, before I went out there was a meeting between representatives of the Department of State and representatives of the FBI up in a conference room on the seventh floor in the Department of State and the FBI expressing great concern about all of these things (this is after the signing of the Shanghai communique in February 1972). And we took the position that you people ought to be able to follow through and we didn't think that the security of the United States was going to be menaced. That's the way it ended up.

Q: Were you there when there was some highly publicized defections of tennis stars and other things like that? Were there any particular problems of Chinese going over on non-immigrant visas and then saying "We don't want to go back?"

HOLDRIDGE: I think very few. The Hu Nan episode I had to deal with as Assistant Secretary of State.

Q: Well we'll pick that up later.

HOLDRIDGE: At the time I cannot recall any problems. There was misbehavior, I think, of a Chinese student at the University of Wisconsin, who during a football game when a young lady stood up next to him to cheer the team on, he groped her. That caused something of a sensation and I think he was removed by the Chinese.

Q: Were you able to sit down with any Chinese officials and say "Look, we're going to have problems, particularly with young people, coming back and forth and Americans coming to

China and your young people going there and there's going to be gropings, there's going to be this and that. We'll work these things out because kids will be kids." Were you able to ever have that kind of conversation?

HOLDRIDGE: We did point out on social occasions. For example, not too long after we opened the Liaison Office we were asked to a Chinese banquet at the Fengzi Yuan, the Phoenix restaurant, in the South City. South of Tiananmen by none other than Qiao Quankua, at that time the Foreign Minister, and we could sit around the table and explain that our systems were not similar and that we were bound to have some problems. We pointed out to Qiao and his colleagues that U.S. policy was not only an Administration mandate but it also involved the Congress of the United States, and the Chinese I think, caught on pretty quick. They knew who their friends were at that time. They don't seem to have any at this point, unfortunately. Guys like Scoop Jackson came out, I have a picture...

Q: Scoop Jackson at that time a Democrat but what would you call him? A right-wing Democrat?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, he was pro-China and he was very sympathetic to maintaining a good working relationship.

Q: From the state of Washington?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, the state of Washington. We missed him when he died. He was given a very fine welcome, I have a picture of me with David Bruce, Scoop Jackson, and Qiao Quankua, all walking along together. Well, some of these people heard us explain the differences, in one of the first group that came, as a matter of fact. It was not too long after we had opened up and one visit was from the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations umbrella organization set up after the Shanghai communique, to handle exchanges at least of a non-scientific nature (exchanges of more scientific nature were handled by the Committee on Scholarly Communications of the National Academy of Sciences). Out with this group came Alec Eckstein from Michigan, a very fine person, he

died some years back, and Doak Barnett and other leading people who had spent a lot of time studying China. While we as officials couldn't necessarily say these are some of the pitfalls, the non-governmental organizations would have no problems about doing that sort of thing. Explaining to their Chinese opposite numbers and the academic circles and what government circles that met and saw that there were problems that we had to take into account in the respective systems.

Q: Was there any outreach through these groups to the next generation of Chinese leaders through their main universities and all that? Really not propaganda, but simply saying this is the way we are and studying of courses in essentially American history and American government so they can find out about these peculiar people?

HOLDRIDGE: Actually we didn't do that sort of thing. We assumed that the Chinese themselves would want to know more about the United States, but what we eventually worked out was to have the Chinese permit the “Voice of America” to broadcast into China. They didn't jam the VOA English and that eventually turned out to be one of the most popular programs. I would hear Zhao Jia, whose name I mentioned before, used to listen to...

Q: Zhao Jia was who?

HOLDRIDGE: She was in the Foreign Ministry in the America's Division. I used to turn VOA on first thing in the morning and get the news. After the news there was this program “Words and Their Meanings”, and the Chinese loved that sort of thing. American expressions came into being.

Q: How about visitors, particularly from Congress but elsewhere. Was this a tax to your facility?

HOLDRIDGE: No, we were delighted to have them because it gave us more access. We'd bunk them in the Beijing Hotel or if they were well known to David Bruce or later to

George Bush they would stay at his residence. There were some extra guest rooms in that little building. Well not all that little, it has two bedrooms in it but there are a couple of smaller bedrooms upstairs and a couple of smaller ones downstairs. So you could handle a number of visitors. Personal friends of George Bush used to end up staying with George Bush. But otherwise we would put them in the Beijing Hotel and make sure that they were taken care of. We would assign an officer as a control officer and we would use this opportunity to call up and make appointments with the Minister of Foreign Trade or people in the Foreign Ministry or whoever that they wanted to see. They often wanted to see people such as Zhou En-lai, Scoop Jackson perhaps being one of the last Americans to see him alive. He did show up finally in public on September 30, 1974. He died the following year. David Bruce had left but Evangaline Bruce was still there and I was charg# and I flew the American flag and used our American Cadillac to go to the Great Hall of the People for the big bash which the Chinese always staged in honor of National Day, October 1, usually on September 30, the night before. I lost a little of the thread of what I was saying.

Q: About the visitors.

HOLDRIDGE: Oh yes. We were always happy to have them because for long periods of time we would have no contact with our Chinese friends. Zhou En-lai and Qiao Guanghua, who I thought was on Zhou En-lai's team, were preoccupied with this “Pi Lin, Pi Kung” campaign which began just about the time we got there in May 1973. It began with Pi Kung, which was to criticize Confucius, and the idea was that Confucius had called for “restoration of names,” allowing people who had served in the feudal days as senior ministers of various feudal governments, to be restored to positions of authority because they had a certain amount of expertise. They (the Chinese) didn't want to lose that expertise. Let me turn this off for a minute.

Q: We're talking about Confucius and this restoration of names.

HOLDRIDGE: It was obviously a ploy by people who didn't like Zhou En-lai politically, to try to put him out on a limb and saw it off from under him. Because Zhou had brought back a number of people who had been victims of the Cultural Revolution and put them back into positions of authority, including among others Deng Xiaoping. The people who were anti this kind of change, I think essentially who turned out later to be the so called “Gang of Four”, immediately drummed up this campaign to criticize Confucius and of course for Confucius read Zhou En-lai, for bringing these people back out of limbo. There was indeed a big campaign going on, and then about that time along comes the Tenth Party Congress not too long after we got settled in Beijing. All of a sudden, out of nowhere, “Pi Kung” was joined with “Pi Lin” to criticize Lin Biao. So the campaign became “Pi Lin” - “Pi Kung.”

Q: Lin Biao was the what?

HOLDRIDGE: Lin Biao had been the Minister of Defense, the senior-most Chinese military man, and at the Party Congress in 1968, designated as Mao Zedong's successor. He was the one who had apparently plotted against Mao. As I understand it, his idea was to plant a bomb underneath the railroad line where Mao was going to be traveling and set the thing off and blow everybody on board the train to kingdom come. The plot was discovered, and Lin Biao fled the country in Chinese military aircraft which ran out of fuel somewhere over Outer Mongolia and crashed, killing all aboard, who were burned beyond recognition. This was in September 1971, that little episode took place, just before the second Kissinger visit, and of course it still is a mystery to this day who did what to whom and why. How the man who is designated as Mao's successor, as early as just three years before the time of the alleged coup, would turn against Mao. So Pi Lin - Pi Kung, we couldn't figure out the linkage and nobody else could either. And it confused the dickens out of the Chinese as to what this was all about, but they dutifully read Confucius and all of the horrors that he had perpetrated and then they read Lin Biao and all of the things that he had allegedly done, of course trying to fit these two different situations together. This just left people in a quandary. I recall when Henry Kissinger made a visit to China, this was in the fall of

1973, and Zhou En-lai at the dinner for Henry in the Great Hall of the People laughingly said that he had been the one responsible for inserting the Pi Lin episode into the Pi Kung campaign. Which immediately diverted attention from Zhou En-lai and out spiraling into nowhere, and it saved I suppose a lot of problems for Zhou En-lai.

Q: We had developed the fine art of kremlinology during the post World War II period, but it sounds like when you got into the Chinese sea that this was just sort of an enigma within a riddle.

HOLDRIDGE: Well, if I may take a certain amount of perverse pride, I think I figured it out. What Zhou was doing, was confusing the issue so that the heat was no longer directed against him. As I started to say, the problem being that for a long time the Chinese seemed to be preoccupied with so much of their own internal situation that we didn't hear much from them. We were there, and we went about our day-to-day business, and we issued visas, and we had contact with the Diplomatic Services Bureau over a variety of different matters involving housing and servants and what have you, but it didn't get us in to see the senior people. But senior visitors such as Scoop Jackson or the National Committee, people like that, we could make arrangements for them, and this gave us contact. We could get a better sense, somewhat at least, of what was going on inside China.

Q: At that time of course we didn't have anything but our thing in Beijing. We didn't have any Consulate.

HOLDRIDGE: No, Beijing was our only point.

Q: Could you travel around much?

HOLDRIDGE: To a point yes and to a point no. Whenever we wanted to go out of town we had to apply to the Public Security Bureau through the Foreign Ministry for permission. If it happened to be a well known place, if we wanted to go to Shanghai or Nanjing

something like that, usually there would be no problem. Going out to other places became more difficult. Happenstance for example, took me to a place that was off limits, which happened to be the capital of Shaanxi province. We were going to spend the night at the old revolutionary capital at Yenan and then fly on to Xian, which was certainly a wonderful destination, the capital of the Tang dynasty and before that had also been identified with the Han dynasty, a wonderful historical site. We made our travel plans and we would spend the night at Yenan and then we would go to Xian the next day. But on the way we landed at Taiyuan, the capital of Shaanxi province, and at Taiyuan we sat at the airport for about four hours. The weather in Xian in the afternoons—all we had was the World War II strip which a C-47 could land on, but if the wind shifted in any way it was bumpy and it was risky. The Chinese were very cautious about going into any place. If there was a cloud on the horizon no bigger than a man's fist, they might just cancel the whole flight. So we got canceled at Taiyuan which was off-limits. We got a chance to see one of the great historic sites of China, the Jin Si. It's a temple going back to the Jin dynasty about 1000 years back, or a little more than that, and still intact. One of the few places that was intact, and we loved it. We could see factories in the distance belching out yellow smoke which suggested something to do with sulfur. So it was obviously the center of the Chinese chemical industry which is why it was off limits. But often when we would apply to go to a place, back would come our request “Bu fang bian,” not convenient.

Q: What about contact with non-government people or even lower ranking government people on a personal basis, at that point was this pretty well out of the...?

HOLDRIDGE: It was possible to ask people from the Foreign Ministry or other government departments to dinner at a Chinese restaurant. There we would have a chance to chat on more relaxed grounds, bringing up little issues and talking about the state of our relationship. Occasionally we would be asked to dinner by the Chinese. Of course we were strictly speaking a diplomatic mission, we had all the appearances of a diplomatic mission, we had the communications, we had the Marine guards (which caused us to no end of trouble later), and we had the flag flying out front and we had diplomatic tags on

our car and we were in pretty much the same boat as anybody else when we applied to travel to various parts of China. There were just two things that we did not do, one was to participate in the Chiefs of Mission trips organized by the Chinese Foreign Ministry twice a year to visit parts of China in which the Foreign Minister Chen I led for a while before he fell by the wayside and was caught up by the Cultural Revolution, people like that would go out and escort the Chiefs of Mission of the Diplomatic Corps to various places in China. We were not allowed to go, nor did we attend banquets in the Great Hall of the People for visiting VIP's, which I always considered a blessing. [laughter] I didn't have to go through all of that extra confusion. But other than that, we were treated just like regular diplomats.

Q: Treated like regular diplomats but did you find that you could meet somebody in the barber shop or something and chat with them and that sort of thing?

HOLDRIDGE: The answer was no. The Chinese kept very much to themselves and we never saw the inside of a Chinese residence the whole time we were there. There was no way that you could talk to people in the privacy of their own homes or other than having them to dinner in a restaurant. You could talk to them there and bring up little issues. I can recall George Bush asking Qiao Guanghua, the Foreign Minister and Qiao Guanghua's wife—Zhang Hanji—who turned out later to be very close to Jiang Ching, which made life a little tough for Qiao Guanghua, since he was very close to Zhou En-lai who was the target of the Gang of Four. But at any rate, George Bush asked Qiao Guanghua and his wife, accompanied by a couple of other outriders from the Foreign Ministry, to dinner. We could talk across the table, George Bush would bring up certain issues. We had carefully laid out some of the problems that we hoped that he might address, which he did and he did very well at it. In the kind of give and take situation that you're talking about—informal, other that the Chinese dinner track, there was no contact.

Q: George Bush came out while you were there?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes.

Q: At that time he was not unknown, he had been around replacing Bruce, how did you all feel about him coming there?

HOLDRIDGE: We were very sorry to see David Bruce go, I was very close to David. I remember walking him out to the airplane and he said to me “John, I'm very sad.” In fact the rug had been pulled out from under him by the Administration. What happened was, the question came up of who was going to replace Spiro Agnew as Vice President?

Q: Who had been ousted for... HOLDRIDGE: Yes. For having been on the take while Governor of Maryland. George was very anxious to become the Vice President at that time, but it went to Gerald Ford. As a consolation prize for George Bush they offered him any job which he wanted in the Federal government commensurate with his status. He picked Chief of the Liaison Office. One afternoon a cable came in and David Bruce called me in and said “John, what do you think of this?” and he showed me this cable and they were offering David Bruce as a consolation prize for him, the Ambassadorship to NATO, the North Atlantic Council. He wondered if he should take it. I thought for crying out loud, here was a distinguished gentleman with some many years of service, he should be allowed to go out of the Federal government with a certain amount of dignity, and I urged him to take it, but I also urged him to find a young, “full of beans,” vigorous, Deputy Chief of Mission who could fill in for him at a lot of the functions. David's feet hurt, as I told you, and I couldn't see him standing around at too may cocktail parties and I knew that Brussels was going to be filled with cocktail parties. I told him to get a good DCM who could take over a lot of the socializing burden and I guess that's what David did. He did go off to Brussels, where unfortunately at the age of 74 he died. A big loss to us all, what a distinguished gentleman. I cannot but continue to admire David Bruce, and a perfect choice for the head of the Liaison Office.

George was somewhat different, he came in and he saw that he didn't know much about China and assumed that we did, and therefore he allowed the Embassy to be run essentially by the old China hands of which I was the leading protagonist. There were a

couple or three spots when George was up at the Great Wall or not in town, that I “pinch hit” for him. There was one time when Mike Mansfield came...

Q: Who was then Senate Majority Leader?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, and Mike Mansfield came and had a meeting with Deng Xiaoping and I represented the Embassy there. I went back home afterwards, I was running a fever of about 103 degrees, but I wasn't going to pass this opportunity up, so I went home and in my sickbed wrote up all of the notes and then sent the cablegram in, a report on Deng Xiaoping's conversations with Mike Mansfield. Of course there were episodes like that, as I say, where you got the senior people, you smoked them out and you had a chance to listen to what was on their minds and got a better feel for what was happening in China. But of course, knowing what was going on in China meant that you ought to have had a good China background. Everyday we read the “New China News Agency” in Chinese and we also got it in English and we would compare the two, sometimes there would be differences that would be significant. We read the “People's Daily” everyday and you could pick up some very interesting tidbits in it as to what was going on behind the scenes. Do you want me to give you an episode?

Q: Sure. Absolutely.

HOLDRIDGE: Shortly after we got there, this was in October 1973, the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy appeared on the scene. They had played a number of concerts in places besides Beijing but finally flew into Beijing and gave a series of what you might call, rehearsal concerts in the Hall of the Nationalities down the street from the Tiananmen. Very well attended by the Chinese, they were thrilled to have this world class orchestra there under Eugene Ormandy. The final night, who should show up for the concert sitting next to David Bruce and Evangaline Bruce, were Yao Wenyuan, the Minister of State for Cultural Affairs, and Jiang Ching. These people, two of the four members of the Gang of Four, the other two being Wang Hungwen who was the putative

successor to Mao by this time, and Zhang Qunqiao who was the Mayor of Shanghai, neither of them were there, but the other two were. The Philadelphia Orchestra put on a splendid performance including, playing Beethoven's 6th (the Pastoral Symphony). Now they [the orchestra members] were very upset by that because this piece had not been on their designated list of pieces to play ahead of time, but by golly they were told they were going to play Beethoven's 6th and they said “We don't have the music.” The Chinese said “That's alright, we'll fly it in from Shanghai.” Which they did. It [the Philadelphia Orchestra] being a very competent, professional orchestra, played Beethoven's 6th very well. On the program was also Resphigi's Pines of Rome. They ended up with a rousing rendition of the Stars and Stripes Forever, which brought the house down. The Americans in the audience particularly enjoyed that. Afterwards we went ahead and had a little session with Jiang Qing and Yao Wenuan, and Jiang Ching charmed Eugene Ormandy, it was almost embarrassing to see the way she worked on him. She charmed Eugene Ormandy and gave him a book on Chinese music which she had personally autographed.

Q: She had the Ministry of Culture, or something like that?

HOLDRIDGE: She was really in charge of culture through this guy Yao Wenuan, who was also present, and she had destroyed Chinese musical history and the tradition of Chinese opera by substituting revolutionary operas for the traditional Chinese warrior versus princess, king, sort of thing. She also had a little envelope filled with cassia blossoms. She said she had picked those in her garden that very afternoon and she took one out and sniffed it and she said that she wanted Eugene Ormandy to give these blossoms to the members of the orchestra. She said they could either sniff them or put them in their tea. Poor Eugene Ormandy was just like my little dog, rolling over with all four feet sticking up in the air, and he thought he had made this tremendous cultural breakthrough. As a matter of fact, there had been a reception before the orchestra departed, at the residence for Li Delun, the conductor of the Beijing Philharmonic Ensemble and other leading cultural figures. The young pianist who was supposed to be such a hot shot, who helped compose the “Yellow River Concerto” among others, one of a committee. We thought we had scored

a real cultural breakthrough in opening up China to the outside world. Well, the next day we tucked Eugene Ormandy and the orchestra on board a U.S. aircraft and off they flew, and we thought that would be the end of it, but it wasn't. This got into Chinese internal politics. About two weeks after the departure I opened up my “People's Daily,” the first thing I did in the morning was to read the “People's Daily,” and on the inside front page was this enormous article attacking western program music. I couldn't understand many of the characters, I'd never seen them before. I had to look it all up in my dictionary and this is what I was able to figure out. The attack was against western program music such as: Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony and Resphigi's Pines of Rome for watering down the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses. There was Zhou En-lai sticking it to Jiang Qing because she showed up with Yao Wenuan at this function and sat next to David Bruce. It must have been well known that she liked Beethoven's 6th because in Henry Kissinger's second visit to China in October 1971, we went to the Great Hall of the People for a cultural evening, Henry was sitting next to Jiang Qing, what I would call the most unlikely couple of the year, and what did we get but Beethoven's 6th. Obviously Jiang Qing liked it and so it was Jiang Qing who had inserted Beethoven's 6th on the program, and I think a lot of Chinese knew that this was a piece that she favored. So consequently, Jiang Qing had crawled out on a limb, culturally speaking, and Zhou En-lai had sawed it off. Getting back at all of this Pi-Lin, Pi-Kung business and putting Jiang Qing on the defensive. I thought that might be the end of it, but oh no, about two weeks later out comes a little piece, also in the “People's Daily,” I found it on page six. It was a box saying “Antonioni defames China”. The idea was that Antonioni, this character who was the great Italian film maker, had been brought to China, allowed to come in by Zhou En-lai, got his visa through the Foreign Ministry, but Zhou kept a very close watch on the Foreign Ministry. So it was with Zhou En-lai's consent that Antonioni came in. And what did he do in China? When he took his film on China he was accused of glorifying not the new China, such as the great bridge Nanjing across the Yangtze River which was entirely built and designed by Chinese, no Soviets need apply, and also panning from the bridge down to a little boy standing near the bridge in the traditional Chinese little boy trousers, open at

the rear. So that kind of thing was considered very offensive by the Chinese. The article in question quoted the fellow that directed traffic in front of the Tiananmen as expressing high indignation at the way Antonioni had insulted China. This was Jiang Qing firing back at Zhou En-lai, who had allowed Antonioni in. This led to a period of utter confusion in China that anything that seemed to smack of foreigners doing something that would reflect adversely on China made a mess out of relationships. We had to be very cautious, very careful. Wherever you went you had to ask permission to take pictures, “Is this all right?” If a guide was there and if he said alright we went ahead. It was a very difficult period of time.

Q: How was the Vietnam War playing at that time? We were getting out, but it basically collapsed by the time you left, didn't it?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, the big collapse came about April 1975. We had this little Mayaguez episode to take care of. Remember the Mayaguez episode? It was a ship taken by the Khmer Rouge and its crew removed, etc. So I had to work on that, and George Bush was with a gang of visiting fireman up at the Great Wall, so I had to send Don Anderson around to the Vietnamese. We got a flash message from the Department to send an ultimatum to the Vietnamese, let these people go or else. I had Don Anderson, who spoke French as well as Chinese, he'd been an interpreter in Paris for the talks that our Ambassador had with the Chinese Ambassador. The message was delivered and we managed to extricate ourselves from that situation. The tail end of Vietnam was messy. The Chinese did not go out of their way to embarrass us, though. They just sort of let things ride. We read the morning papers, the “People's Daily” and “New China News Agency” and so on and just had to swallow our pride, go along with it.

Q: Well I take it that in a way, could you even read the fact that the United States looked awfully weak? Was this coming out in the Chinese news or was it just not...?

HOLDRIDGE: I think the Chinese just played it straight. The victory of the North Vietnamese over the South Vietnamese, the eventual seizure of Saigon. Brunson McKinley had already left as I said, his time was up and he had gone off. Vietnam's fall did not cause any undo strain in the U.S.- China relationship. We felt a certain sense of embarrassment but it was something we had to live with.

Q: How about the Soviets there? How did you see the role of the Soviets during the time you were there? Did you have contact with them?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, we had quite a bit of contact. The Russians tried to indeed get us to talk to them as much as possible. In fact, we had a little organization there of DCMs who used to get together and exchange ideas about what was going on in China and one of the avid participants was the Soviet DCM. We had luncheons together, we would go to various missions and have lunch there, and then have a discussion group thereafter. The Soviet Union representative participated vigorously and the Soviets also gave film nights. We went to see some of their films. I can remember seeing 'The Brothers Karamazov' at the Soviet Embassy, but they were very much in the shadow at this time, essentially because of the ill feeling generated by the long polemic between the Soviets and Mao Zedong, that had left its mark and then the Soviet military build up and the whole Soviet attitude toward what the Marxist revolution was all about. Mao talking about carrying the revolution through to the end, and with the Soviets preaching that the victory of communism could be won by showing the superiority of the socialist system, and Mao insisting “no bloodshed, no victory.” That sort of thing. So the Soviets had their own compound, it was a very large one. It had been formerly a convent of Russian Orthodox nuns. A little bit to the north and somewhat to the east, and the road leading into it had been named “Anti-Modern Revisionist” street by the Chinese.

Q: This two-year period that you were in China, Zhou En-lai died while you were there?

HOLDRIDGE: No, he was on his last legs. He managed to make it through the National People's Congress which came in January or February 1975. He didn't die until early 1976, but he was completely hospitalized in the last stages of prostate cancer. And he did not appear in public, I told you about the last time I saw him. But I know that he appeared for the National People's Congress in 1975 because he gave a big speech, talking about the four modernizations. A man always looking to be realistic about what China was and what it should do and how it should do it. Turning his back on these revolutionary ideals of Mao.

Q: Mao Zedong was still alive?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, he died in September 1976.

Q: What sort of a figure was he at that time?

HOLDRIDGE: Oh my, everybody knew in the diplomatic community, it was common knowledge that Mao was not really compos mentis. He was a shriveled hull of his former self. I remember one Ambassador telling me about when his Prime Minister showed up in town, the two of them went to call on Mao and here was Mao sitting in his chair in his library and two nurses on either side heaved the old gentleman erect and he tottered over and gave his hand to the visiting Prime Minister. Then he muttered something completely indistinguishable, didn't mean anything, it just sounded like garble, and Nancy Tang and Wang Hairong, the two faithful interpreters, turned that into “The Chairman is delighted to welcome you to China Mr. Prime Minister, your visit will enhance the friendship between our two peoples.” The comment from the Ambassador was “The old man was ga-ga.” Henry Kissinger came in the fall of 1974 hoping to meet with Mao, and Mao was unavailable. What Mao did was to get out of Beijing during the winter months (I couldn't blame him, it got very cold in Beijing) and Henry missed him, much to Henry's dismay, but the rest of us enjoyed it because we got a very nice trip to Suzhou, flying down

in a Chinese military aircraft and seeing the wonderful gardens of Suzhou, not too far from Shanghai.

Q: During the whole time that you were there, Henry Kissinger was the Secretary of State by this time, did he keep his hand in very heavily into what was going on?

HOLDRIDGE: Well he sure as the dickens did on Cambodia. David Bruce and I, before David left, thought that it might be a good idea to try to reintroduce Sihanouk into the equation. We wrote a telegram to Washington to the Secretary suggesting that, and we were roundly rebuffed, our ears were “boxed” by Henry Kissinger for even suggesting such a thing. Actually I think behind the scenes Kissinger was trying to do just that, but to have somebody upstage him was intolerable. For the most part he was preoccupied at this period so much with the Arab-Israeli situation that we didn't really hear very much from him.

Q: Were you still considered this man, or had you been gone long enough...

HOLDRIDGE: Oh heck, at this time I was working for the dear Department. I was the only DCM they had. The White House relationship was tangential.

Q: Internal development, you read the papers, did you use FBIS, Foreign Broadcast Information Service?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes we did.

Q: Did you find this useful?

HOLDRIDGE: Very.

Q: What about the Foreign Diplomatic community? Sometime in these sort of closed societies this becomes, everybody sort of sits together and whatever you hear you kind of put it all together and then run off and do your cables afterwards.

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, we did that too. In the Foreign Diplomatic community I mentioned the DCMs used to get together, and one of the ones we found the most useful was the Romanian DCM. The Romanians were off the reservation as far as the U.S.S.R. was concerned, as were the Chinese. They were going off in divergent ideological directions, but the fact remained that the Romanians were far enough off the reservation that the little bits that they picked up from the Chinese, the Chinese would confide more in the Romanians perhaps than anyone else. So we got a lot of good insights from the Romanians.

Q: I would imagine that during this period, I mean obviously Zhou En-lai was sick and it was well known that he was sick, Mao Zedong was out of it, and were getting ready for this sort of titanic battle with the Gang of Four versus Deng Xiaoping. Was this the major preoccupation with China?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes. I talked about the speech at the National People's Congress in 1975 by Zhou En-lai in which he talked a very realistic line about the four modernizations, how China should progress. Knowing about China's internal situation, it was a very sound and obviously informed speech. Almost immediately, though, Red Flag, the Chinese party magazine came out with a long article about opposing bourgeois influence, inferring that Zhou En-lai had been too close to the West or saying too many things that were favorable to the West, and Qiao Guanghua, the Foreign Minister, said the same. So “pull out the poisonous weeds of bourgeois influence,” signs like that, appeared all over town, so Zhou En-lai's statement was then in a way contradicted, not wholly but partially, by this anti-poisonous weeds campaign.

Q: Did you and your officers spend a lot of time running around, walking around town, looking at posters on the wall?

HOLDRIDGE: Absolutely. We had bicycles and my wife and I used to bicycle happily through many of the back streets and back alleys of Beijing, looking in to see political

meetings underway and seeing the posters up, what it was all about. We had come to the conclusion that a lot of this politics was just going way over the head of the Chinese people, they couldn't care less about it. If you'd read the Chinese newspapers the “People's Daily” or the “Worker's Daily” or whatever, you'd get the idea that all of China was seething with political activity, it just wasn't so. This is where we had a big fight with Hong Kong. Hong Kong was continuing its efforts to read the tea leaves about China and its sources of information were entirely based on, well not entirely but for the large part, based on the Chinese press. They would interpret the Chinese press in the way that the Chinese press wanted to be interpreted, that all throughout China the campaigns were running to oppose bourgeois liberalism and to put out the poisonous weeds. We would drive around Beijing and life was going on as usual. I'd see through the gates of a compound a whole bunch of people in a study session who couldn't care less. We went to a Beijing heavy industrial plant on one occasion and we found about fifty percent of the workers sitting down smoking and chatting and reading newspapers. The other fifty percent were kind of working, but not very hard. China was obviously going on a downslope as far as productive activity was concerned, people were just fed up to the teeth with these heavy doses of politics and were not responding. So we reported, and this is where we had our conflict with Hong Kong, which saw things in a different light using only the sources available in Hong Kong.

Q: This in a way reflects what is often said about Washington inside the beltway and outside the beltway, that within the beltway around Washington, politics are our bread and butter and everybody who is anybody reads a newspaper and is talking about it, but yet a great majority of people could care less. HOLDRIDGE: We have a farm in West Virginia, we go down there to Lewisburg or Alderson, the two towns nearest to us, and none of this stuff reacts. Even Charleston, the state capital, they'll pick up a little bit of course when it comes to medicare and social issues which involve the American people yes, but foreign policy, forget it.

Q: A question that often occurs to me and based on my own experience, we had Marine guards there, but at the same time I've often thought that it might make more sense in sensitive places to have essentially retired sergeants and their wives come and do the work or in other words sort of the British system where they have an older group because young Marines are full of "piss and vinegar" and hormones and they go out and get drunk, they chase after girls, I mean they're young kids and I'm not sure that they are that useful.

HOLDRIDGE: Well they were okay while they were on duty. But off duty you had to watch them like hawks. And of course we had this uniform business, and one thing led to another over a period of time. Henry Kissinger saved them from being thrown out on their backsides by his visit in 1973, he talked to Zhou En-lai and Zhou said, alright, let them stay but they've got to behave themselves. The Marine bar was the focus of problems, but was the only place in town where you could buy a drink and have a conversation in English which would be other than political or whatever, and the Marine bar was just jammed. American swing music or rock and roll was played there and it was a very popular spot. The Chinese over a period of time began to object to this sort of thing. They were saved for awhile, and then I saved them again from having a Marine ball in which they were going to cut a cake with a Marine Corps emblem on it and wear uniforms. They then decided no uniforms, and then they decided no cake, and finally they decided no Marine ball. It would have raised too much of a problem and eventually they got thrown out anyway on something rather trivial. The Marines were organizing a baseball league among the representatives of countries which played baseball, the Canadians and Mexicans, etc., and they signed their little flyers "Killer so and so", and "Slugger so and so," which went out to the diplomatic corps, and the Chinese took this as an indication of an organized military unit and out they went.

Q: Is there any other area that we ought to cover about this period?

HOLDRIDGE: Well I did talk about the period in which anybody who was acting in a way such as to suggest reporting derogatorily about China would be in great difficulty, that

occupied a considerable amount of time. I do recall the visit of Kim Il Sung, the “great leader” as opposed to the “dear leader.”

Q: The dear leader is the son.

HOLDRIDGE: Anyway Kim Il Sun came to China after the collapse of Vietnam and in effect was arguing for the right of North Korea to attack South Korea. His point was that if there were a popular uprising in South Korea, it would be the “proletarian international duty” of the North to come to the aid of it's brethren in the South, and the only thing they had to lose was the military line of demarcation. The Chinese didn't quite see it in those terms. Here's Kim Il Sun talking about attacking the South and the Chinese talking about “peaceful reunification.” The Chinese point of view prevailed, so by the time that Kim Il Sun was departing he was also talking about peaceful reunification.

Q: At that time and today and since the end of the war we had at least a division in South Korea which would have meant war with the United States automatically so that this was not a very viable alternative. Then you left there again in 1975. Then where did you go?

HOLDRIDGE: I was assigned as Ambassador to Singapore. So I went home and had my little session up there in the Senate. The only guy that showed up was Sarbanes. So consequently my confirmation hearing was a snap and I showed up in Singapore in August 1975.

Q: You were in Singapore from when to when?

HOLDRIDGE: From 1975 to 1978.

Q: Everybody when they go out to a post has a sort of a check list such as, what are American interests and what do I want to accomplish. What sort of goals did you set in mind for Singapore?

HOLDRIDGE: The main thing I had to worry about in Singapore was to keep Singapore available to the U.S. Military for whatever facilities that the U.S. Military felt it needed. My big chore there indeed was to make sure that we could use Singapore's military airports as stopping places for flights on to Diego Garcia. The Middle East was beginning to loom as a real problem at this time. Iraq not so much, but Iran, yes. So Diego Garcia became very important and we managed to work out an R&R agreement with the Singaporeans that people could come from Diego and spend a week or so in Singapore, not exactly the most exciting place for Americans on R&R. They would have preferred Patpong Road in Thailand. Singapore was available, and they could stock up on supplies there, aircraft could refuel and we also managed to provide dockyard facilities for U.S. ships. That had already been worked out, there was a small naval detachment there that handled repair work on U.S. warships and that has been extended into a more broad relationship, militarily speaking.

Q: I might just say for the record that Diego Garcia is a dot of an island in the middle of the Indian Ocean isn't it? Where we had at about this time or a little earlier, started a program of stockpiling equipment to meet emergencies in the Middle East.

HOLDRIDGE: That's right, we have these logistical support ships which are loaded with tanks and various kinds of ammunition and weapons and so on. So in case of some kind of emergency Diego can be used as a base for quick resupply of American units flown in from elsewhere to the Middle East.

Q: That was used extensively during the 1989 - 1991 period in the Gulf War against Iraq. What was your reading before you went out, I assume Lee Kuan Yew was the...

HOLDRIDGE: Lee Kuan Yew and I got along just fine. He and I saw things pretty much the same way. He called me over on one occasion, he was going to go to China and he wanted to know how he should act. This was in 1976, he was going to make a visit with his wife, a state visit to China. I gave him the advice that the thing for him to do was to stick to

his principles. Don't water your principles down, stand by your guns. The Chinese would be happy to have you give in to whatever it was they wanted you to give in to, but don't, I said. They won't respect you, they'll take any kind of gratuitous gift that you give them but they won't respect you and the thing to do that you really need is to maintain your respect. So off he went, and about a month later he called me and said “I took your advice and it worked out fine.”

Q: What was the situation in Singapore at this time? It had been essentially a city state for how long?

HOLDRIDGE: It got its internal self government in 1956 with a British Governor General still there and then it became a part of Malaysia. Malaysia was a creation of the British to try to balance off the racial issue in that part of the world. They called it communal balance.

Q: We're talking about racial being Malay versus Chinese.

HOLDRIDGE: With the Indians playing some kind of a minor role off there in the corner. So the point of the issue was into some way for Singapore to be merged, it didn't make much sense for an island of two hundred twenty-five square miles to go off on its own, so the British Foreign Office's hope was to work out some kind of arrangement where (originally it was Malaya when the British marched out in 1957) they thought that they would create Malaysia and balance off the Chinese in Singapore, who if added ipso facto into Malaya would have become the predominant race, by adding in British North Borneo and Sarawak along with Singapore to a greater entity known as Malaysia. Well, Lee Kuan Yew blew that one out of the water about 1965. Malaysia had been established somewhere in the 1960s, and in fact the Singaporeans had fought in the confrontation with the Indonesians in Borneo or Kalimantan in Brunei and they had done alright, and Singapore had paid its dues but Lee Kuan Yew, a man of enormous capability but also enormous ambition, at that time began to make speeches about a “noncommunal”

Malaysia. That was a real red flag waved in front of the Malaysians up in Kuala Lumpur. The government up there, the UMNO, United Malays National Organization, took this very dimly because if you talked about noncommunalism, this would give the Chinese a real say in the national political future. The way it worked out in theory, about fifty-one percent of the population of Malaysia is Malays, about thirty odd percent, it says here in fine print, are Chinese, and the rest are Kadazans and Indians and Westerners. But actually, if you were to take a census even now, you'd find that the Chinese might even be in the slight majority. With Singapore added on to Malaysia—Singapore's population at that time was about one million and three quarters, of which the majority by far were Chinese. This would tip the political balance in favor of the Chinese and the Tunku. Abdul Rahnan, who was I guess still the Prime Minister of Malaysia at that time, wasn't having any of that. No Chinese was going to run the place. So Singapore was cordially invited out of Malaysia. I have seen a television clip of Lee Kuan Yew facing the press after this little event, and he was literally weeping. He said he never believed it would go so far, but this is what came out of that speech that began about a noncommunal Malaysia. So Singapore was forced to go in alone, and it's done very well in the meanwhile.

Q: Why did Singapore let us have essentially solid support for basically our military posture in that part of the world?

HOLDRIDGE: Lee Kuan Yew, although he is not a great admirer of American culture, is a great respecter of American power. He really is one of the few people that I know of that gives the United States credit for keeping the dominoes from falling. We stuck it out in Vietnam long enough to give the other Asian countries, Southeast Asia in particular, a chance to reform and refine their own political systems to the point where they could stand the test of time, which they have done in varying ways. But at any rate we kept the dominoes from falling and Lee Kuan Yew is very grateful, and he regards the U.S. military presence as a very useful balancing force. That is why he has made these facilities available to us.

Q: What was the political situation in Singapore?

HOLDRIDGE: There was a little bit of an effort on the part of a group calling itself the Barisan Socialis, a kind of left wing labor oriented party, to try to make a stand. There was an Indian lawyer named Jayaratnam who headed up the Barisan Socialis and I think he won a seat in the election. There is a parliament in Singapore, believe it or not, it's unicameral. There's no upper house, but they were a house, it meets regularly, dominated by the PAP and I think the one lone voice in the opposition was this man Jayaratnam, and that was intolerable to Lee Kuan Yew who brought criminal libel charges against poor old Jayaratnam which the Supreme Court upheld after the courts had gone through the routine of saying, yeah, he did commit libel. And poor old Jayaratnam was forced to cough up an enormous fine which broke him economically, and I suppose broke him politically. I think his son is still active in Singapore politics. Singapore is very concerned about what they would call the creeping vote of the opposition, they had only won in one of the votes while I was there by seventy percent and that worried them and more recently its dropped down to sixty percent or maybe even a little bit lower than that. They are bound and determined that there will be no interruption of party politics of the sort that you may find in the United States, which would detract from the internal stability of Singapore.

Q: Did this inhibit your ability to get out and around? Could you go to this opposition?

HOLDRIDGE:No, well we had chats with people in the University of Singapore and with others who were members of the opposition, but they really didn't amount to very much. I can recall on one occasion, Pat Derian, the great advocate of human rights and democratic rights under the Carter Administration, came out after having lectured Suharto in Indonesia about the detention of communists left over from the 1965 coup period. Anyway, she came to Singapore and first of all she had a conversation with Lee Kuan Yew which I not only arranged but sat in on, it went on for the better part of two hours and she just blasted away at human rights values as she perceived them and Lee Kuan Yew, trying to suggest gently that all these guys that were being detained in Changi jail had to do to

get out was just renounce the use of force in bringing about governmental changes. In effect, Lee was suggesting that there were other systems in government in that part of the world which seemed to work alright, and maybe she shouldn't be quite so down. But she was unconvinced. As we drove away from that interview, she turned to me in the car and said “You know, he's worse than the Argentine Colonels because he knows he's wrong.” How wrong she was, he was convinced that he was right. Lee Kuan Yew called himself the last Victorian to me and he's also a Confucianist. He has tried to introduce the study of Confucianism into the Chinese schools in the sense of the values of Confucianism, the five relationships, and not trying to create chaos in the internal structure of the state so that you can have continued national development. Lee Kuan Yew and Pat Derian didn't see eye to eye, but I could move around and talk to people who were oppositionists. One of these was a former Chief Minister of Singapore, David Marshall, who when Singapore first began to exert its movement toward autonomy became Chief Minister under the British, and then when the PAP took over became an outspoken member of the opposition. When Pat Derian came to town she wanted to talk to oppositionists, so I got a whole bunch of them together at my Public Affair Officer's house and we had a little discussion. There was a very nice young lady from Singapore University (Chan Heng Chae, now Singapore's ambassador to the U.S., but then something of a critic) and three or four others and David Marshall. David Marshall astonished me by telling Pat Derian “You've got to understand, Ms. Derian, that in this part of the world there is another philosophy called Confucianism that looks more toward the continued order of the state, and this takes precedence over the individual rights of a person.” She couldn't understand that, but I mentioned this to Lee Kuan Yew about a week later and he said “David?”, and the next thing I knew David Marshall was appointed Ambassador to France. He was rewarded.

Q: I think of Lee Kuan Yew and his “keep Singapore clean” and then having our people of Diego Garcia sitting on this barren little island going to have R&R, I mean I know what R&R is. I had R&R from Korea as an enlisted man and I used to watch this in other places.

How in God's name could you deal with the problem of young American lads going to have their fun and games in Singapore?

HOLDRIDGE: There was a hotel which was taken under the wing of our Navy unit where the people were quartered when they came on R&R, and I don't think anybody asked too many questions about who went in and out the front door, at what times of the day or night.

Q: You're talking about girls?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, like girls. [laughter] And the Singapore government apparently did not raise any objections all the time that this was going on while I was there, there was never any difficulty. I used to laugh at the sole nightclub of any consequence in Singapore. It had the best dressed girls, the best looking girls in Singapore (next to the Singapore airline hostesses) but they were also the best dressed and the most dressed. Very little bare female flesh ever showed up.

Q: Were there any other issues that occupied your time before you left?

HOLDRIDGE: Oh yes. Narcotics

Q: Today is November 29, 1995. Let's talk about narcotics. What was the role of narcotics?

HOLDRIDGE: Narcotics were something that Lee Kuan Yew, then the Prime Minister of Singapore, absolutely abhorred and he decided he would take the most stringent measures to oppose it. As far as Singaporeans were concerned anybody caught with fifteen grams was to be considered a “pusher” and then took the long drop at Changi prison.

Q: You're talking about being hung?

HOLDRIDGE: Exactly. They picked up a number of people each month trying to smuggle drugs across the causeway between Johor Baharu and Singapore. There was a customs office on the Singapore side, of course, and a lot of young people on motorcycles or whatever got caught and they were disposed of in the way I described. As far as the average individual, anybody caught using the stuff was thrown into a detention camp for six months or so, or at least until he was judged clean, and run through a military drill —sort of a situation of boot camp. They were also given lectures and severe discipline to try to discourage people from using narcotics. I would say that Singapore is probably one of the most drug free areas in the whole world, but the problem didn't extend just to the Singaporeans. We had an American community there of some size. There was a Singapore American School, the SAS. Drug pushers would get this stuff that was coming in from the Thai-Burma border area refined into heroin, and it was very high grade. You could buy for, say, ten Singapore dollars a little glassine packet maybe three by five inches. That was making its way into the American school, and the Singapore narcotics people and the police got wind of this and cracked down. They found that there were about twenty-five or thirty or so young Americans who were involved in this, and the problem was what to do? Since they were running afoul of Singapore law, the answer was relatively simple: either they went to jail or they would be deported. If they were deported their parents had to go with them and that meant loss of job. There was no way out, that's the way it was.

Q: What was your involvement with this?

HOLDRIDGE: My involvement was that people came to me from both sides. Singapore wanted me to make sure that Americans understood the policy and that it was followed, and the Americans that were involved came to me and were bewailing the fact that their kids got caught and why should they pick on me when they didn't pick on somebody else and so on. Well, it was just one of those things. My job was to make sure that I did not

interfere in Singapore's internal affairs by trying in anyway to defy the law. Fortunately I didn't have anything like the Faye case to worry about.

Q: You might explain just a bit about the Faye case, this is quite a recent manifestation.

HOLDRIDGE: Oh I forgot, if you got caught as a user they also gave you about ten of the best in the backside with a rotan.

Q: The Faye case was something that came up in the early 1990's where a young American boy defaced some cars, what had he done?

HOLDRIDGE: Well he had been out with a bunch of young people. Whether they were all Singaporeans or partly others from the SAS, I don't know, but they were breaking radio aerials off of parked cars and scratching the paint and otherwise defacing some of these vehicles. Of course in Singapore a motor vehicle costs you a bundle because of the import tax, so they're cherished. Consequently it was regarded with a considerably larger degree of severity than it might have been had you parked down there in a parking lot on Fourteenth Street and E, something like that.

Q: He was to be whipped?

HOLDRIDGE: He was to be given five strokes of the rotan. Of course all of the hand wringers in the United States wrung their hands and some human rights groups were up in arms, and the President wrote a letter asking for clemency. Eventually his sentence was reduced to three [strokes] I hope they were good ones, I wouldn't have minded administering them myself.

Q: It was not one that warmed up the indignation of many Americans. It did to those that abhorred any type of physical punishment but I think the young lad probably will not deface cars again.

HOLDRIDGE: I think he had to be very careful when he sat down, for quite awhile. [laughter] Anyway, I think I discussed also my chore of opening up access to Singapore's military facilities to the United States. The flight of C-130's or C-141's.

Q: These were transport planes?

HOLDRIDGE: Transport planes going through Tengah Airbase which was Singapore's military airbase at the time and going on from there to Diego Garcia, and on the way back also stopping and bringing R&R troops and picking up fresh fruits and vegetables. The U.S. Navy would stop there fairly frequently, and had access already to the Singapore former British naval dockyard. It worked out very amicably and I had a very good, I thought, personal relationship with Lee Kuan Yew. Did I talk about Pat Derian?

Q: I'm not sure, why don't you go over it again.

HOLDRIDGE: Pat Derian was the Assistant Secretary for Human Rights and she had been in various places in East Asia stopping before she got to Singapore and Indonesia and putting President Suharto's back up for the way the Indonesians had handled those involved in the 1965 coup. I think 30,000 were still under detention, many of them in the island of Buru, which is off on the Sunda Sea in the Maluku area. She'd really put Suharto's back up and then she came to Singapore (I think I did talk about this but I'll repeat it anyway), she talked to me and then she talked to other people in the Embassy on the question of human rights, and we described that Singapore was doing what it could to keep the crime rate down and to prevent the spread of narcotics use, and using what we might call authoritarian methods to do so but he was approaching this from the standpoint of the greater good of the population as a whole. Rather than curing the symptoms he was out to cure the basic disease as much as he could. I also explained the difference between the philosophies. The Western philosophy of human rights, the individual being all important as opposed to the Confucian idea, the stability of society, the absence of chaos, was the guiding principle. She arranged to see Lee Kuan Yew and I sat there

for the better part of two hours while she and Lee Kuan Yew hurled verbiage at each other. She kind of astonished me half way through, the Prime Minister's Office was on the second floor of the Istana and she was a smoker and she said, “Isn't there someplace we can go where I can have a cigarette?” and he being the perfect host said, “Of course, we'll go up one flight.” There was a dining room up above and he opened up all of the windows to the monsoon which was blowing outside, and we sat inside and she was able to smoke. But it went right past her, Lee Kuan Yew trying to convince her that for the well being of society and all, that the people who were being detained in Changi jail (now this doesn't include just narcotics pushers, there were people who were political opponents who had been identified with the Malayan communist party and who were indeed on the red revolutionary side of the spectrum, they were still in Changi jail and this was some years after they had been arrested) and as far as he was concerned, he said, all they had to do was to foreswear the use of violence in overthrowing the government or changing the government, and they would be released. That was not enough for Pat Derian. She said they should have been released anyway. Political prisoners, that was an abhorrence to her.

Q: Here you are, you understand where Lee Kuan Yew is coming from, you understand where Pat Derian is coming from, you're a diplomat and you're sitting there watching this, did you just sort of watch this verbal “ping pong” or did you try to put it in perspective while you were there? What did you feel your role was?

HOLDRIDGE: No way would I get in the middle of this one. [laughter] I thought I'd let them have their words. Actually as we drove away she turned to me in the car and said “You know, he's worse than the Argentine Colonels because he knows he's wrong.” and that showed that she sat there for the better part of two hours and had never gotten the idea in mind that this man was sincere. He really believed in what he was doing.

Q: What did you do, just sort of wish her well and see her on her way as quickly as possible?

HOLDRIDGE: No. I wished she'd get out of town but she had a couple of other things. She wanted to meet an oppositionist, so I fixed her up with Jayaratnam, he was the leader of the opposition party, I guess it was the Worker's Party then. She was interested in torture, “Was there any torture?” And Jayaratnam as a lawyer should have known better, but he said “Well I've heard that there is torture.” Hearsay of course, it would have been completely inadmissible in any American court of law, but she of course jumped on that. Then in the evening I had brought in a bunch of people who are also anti-PAP, People Actions Party, that doesn't mean that they were revolutionaries or anything of that sort. A woman professor from the University of Singapore and David Marshall who had been formally Chief Minister and had been a gadfly on Singapore politics for years. I do remember mentioning this to you. David Marshall was the one who brought her up short on saying that you've got to understand, Ms. Derian, that in this part of the world there is another philosophy which is predominantly Confucianism which does indeed put the well being of society over the well being of the individual. Again something that she found very difficult to accept. I mentioned this, that David Marshall had spoken in these words to Lee Kuan Yew at a reception a couple of weeks later, and as a consequence I believe David Marshall got himself out of the “dog house” politically and was appointed Ambassador to France. It got him out of the way and got him a prestigious job as far as Lee Kuan Yew was concerned.

Q: Isn't it difficult trying to get into the practice of professional diplomacy? Here you are and here comes somebody who is well plugged into the political circuit in Washington, who really doesn't understand the territory and yet you can say all you want but there's a certain point where you begin to sound like the advocate of the country where you are. You know that this very powerful political person will go back to the United States and say “That Holdridge has just gone over to the enemy.” This is true in many countries, it's not just this one. How do you handle this? How do you prepare yourself before somebody like that comes and during the time they're there?

HOLDRIDGE: Well in effect, I “low keyed it.” If I had anything to say, I would always put it in such a way that I hoped it was calculated not to get her “hackles rising” and let the others around there speak for themselves. Rather than my being an advocate for them I let them be their own advocates. And that seemed to have worked out. I don't know if there are any black marks. As a matter of fact, this is where I first encountered the hand of Warren Christopher, who I found at the time was almost in lockstep with Pat Derian when it came to human rights issues.

Q: He was Under Secretary?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, and he backed her up on all sorts of things. I thought to an excessive degree. For a man that should have understood that while human rights is of course a very important aspect of our overseas diplomacy, it should not take precedence over everything else. Lee Kuan Yew was able to separate out in his own mind the narcotics, human rights elements of what was thrown at him by us from what the American military in particular, was interested in, which was access to Singapore's military facilities, and particularly in support of Diego Garcia.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover in Singapore at that point?

HOLDRIDGE: One little thing, and that is toward the end of my assignment in Singapore, who should show up but Vice President Rockefeller.

Q: Now Pat Derian was part of the Carter Administration, so this is part of the Ford Administration, so Rockefeller was before Pat Derian's visit.

HOLDRIDGE: Let me see, we were celebrating the 200th anniversary of the American Declaration of Independence.

Q: Okay that would have been during the Ford Administration.

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, 1976. So Rockefeller showed up and I had prepared a very through briefing book for him on what he should do when he got to the airport, the issues which were likely to be raised and what he might say in response and so on. All of the things that I would have done for a Presidential visit, such as I did for the Nixon visit when Nixon went to China. The only problem was as I found out later, Rockefeller had dyslexia, he couldn't read very well and he wasn't much of a reader anyway. So I got out there to the airport, and here was the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, leading members of the Singapore government, and a large contingent from the American community arranged through the American Chamber of Commerce, all out there to meet Rockefeller. Again, the arrogance of the U.S. bothered me. It wasn't enough that there was a man from the Singapore air force who would be there with the paddles to tell the airplane where to go and where to stop. They had arranged, of course, an elaborate red carpet lined with little potted trees along either side of the red carpet and the airplane had to stop just so, so that when you opened the door and the ramp was put in they could come down and step on the red carpet. Well the Air Force wanted to do this also, they wanted to have their man on the ground to tell the aircraft where to stop and so they had an Air Force major there with his paddles and the two of them out there, the Singaporean and the American Air Force guy, got into this little hassle as to who was going to tell the plane to stop. The result was the damn thing overshot by twenty feet. [laughter] So then they had to reverse thrust on the ground, which is rough on the engines and rough on fuel, but they did that. They put on their reverse thrusters and the airplane was able to back up to the proper place and then of course Rockefeller came down, and hadn't read a damn thing that I had given him and stumbled through this whole thing of the proceedings of the reviewing of the honor guard and walking around. With him was his wife Happy, remember she had divorced from a previous husband, but with her, however, was her sixteen year old daughter from her previous marriage. There was to be a big dinner at the Istana that night, a formal dinner and everything was laid out according to protocol. All the place cards were set, round tables, there must have been thirty of the darn things, each seating ten. Then “little Ms. Rockefeller” decided that she didn't think she wanted to go. Well you know what would

have happened in that case was that every place card would have to be moved. I went to the political aide to Rockefeller and said “She damn well better show up or this is going to cause an enormous flap if she doesn't appear. They've made all of these preparations and I think it would be a gross mistake in terms of our relationship with Singapore if she doesn't appear.” Well, she did appear.

Q: I'm surprised that Rockefeller wouldn't have the equivalent to an aide. Someone with dyslexia whose reached a high position normally has a Foreign Service officer who goes around and who would basically read the stuff and then say these are the issues and that sort of thing.

HOLDRIDGE: Well the only person he had was one of the people from his own personal staff, that's no good. As far as I know, I was unaware of anybody else. Then of course the next day he departed and this also was in reverse order, the similar kind of disaster. First of all Rockefeller was a great collector of Chinese ceramics, and there was one place in town on Orchard Road that had beautiful Chinese ceramics, all of them probably smuggled in from China. So he went out on an early morning shopping trip to this place and bought all sorts of Chinese ceramics, and they were to be delivered to the airplane by the time that the airplane was to depart. I went down with my vehicle to pick up the Vice President to ride with me and to escort him out, with the flags flying and all the rest, to the airport. Here again, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet and the members of the American community and high ranking Singaporeans were in attendance. It was a typical Singapore July. It was hotter than Hades, the sun just beating down, and of course you're standing there on this concrete ramp with the heat just radiating upwards. We got out there all right, but the only problem was first of all Rockefeller was late, he wanted to stop every so often and take pictures of the Istana and of street scenes, and every so often we would stop and he would either go out the window with the camera or get out of the car entirely. So that made us about fifteen or so minutes late, the Prime Minister standing out there fuming. Then on top of that, just as we were about to bid farewell to Rockefeller and his party with a great sigh of relief, his military aide came up to me and asked if we could

hold the airplane because the artifacts or the Chinese ceramics which Rockefeller had purchased had not been delivered yet, and they were trying to hold the aircraft until these things would come. I said well maybe we can figure out some kind of mechanical problem to hold the plane for about fifteen minutes, but I said that I thought it really inadvisable for anything more than fifteen minutes. He took that aboard and went off and I went back and I heard the Prime Minister saying to the Director of Protocol, “George, I'll kill you!”. Anyway, it wasn't George's fault it was Rockefeller's fault. At any rate five minutes went by and all of a sudden this little yellow station wagon came careening around the corner and went zipping out to the rear exit of the aircraft in which the Vice President was riding, and I watched as sort of a “bucket brigade” formed as these multiple artifacts were handed up into the “belly of the whale,” at which time the airplane finally took off and I sighed this enormous sigh of relief to get these people off my hands.

Q: I suppose you had what is common in the Foreign Service known as a “wheels up” party.

HOLDRIDGE: Well I had to go back, we had enough stuff to worry about at this time* that I decided that it was probably better to go back to the office which at least was air conditioned. One little thing going back to Pat Derian, Lee Kuan Yew was so horrified at Pat Derian, he said “what can I do?” He telephoned me afterwards. He'd seen that this attitude was inflexible, she was just not understanding one damn thing and what could he do to try to get his message across? Well it happened that now-former congressman, Lester Wolf was also in town, and had tried through me, unsuccessfully, to get an audience with Lee Kuan Yew, and since he was a man who was out there working on narcotics and he had connections with human rights, (he was from the House Foreign Affairs Committee) I said why don't you see Congressman Wolf maybe he can carry the word back. Lee Kuan Yew immediately assented, so I went in with him and they had an interesting conversation, about an hours worth, and that saved me with Lester Wolf and it also gave me a few points with Lee Kuan Yew.

Q: You left there when?

HOLDRIDGE: 1978.

Q: Where did you go?

HOLDRIDGE: I was one of those who was sort of wondering where the dickens I was going to go, and I was ordered to the Naval War College at Newport, Rhode Island where I didn't particularly want to go. I looked into the situation, there was no help given by the Navy for anybody other than a naval officer in terms of finding housing and I'd have to roam around the city of Newport to find a satisfactory place to live. I was not particularly thrilled about this and about this time I got a call from Frank Kamm. He was the head of the Office of Emergency Management. He was a former Army Major General of Corps of Engineers, West Point graduate. I got this long distance telephone call from him one night asking if I would be willing to join his staff, at that time, though, he was not with Office of Emergency Management. He was in charge of the Intelligence Community Staff down there at 1776 F Street. I thought okay, that's better. I really didn't want to go to Newport so I accepted that and I found myself back in Washington for the remainder of 1978 on the Intelligence Community staff. This is when Stan Turner was the head of CIA and was very busily engaged in firing about seventy percent of all the people in the operations side. A good friend of mine, Bill Wells, who had been Station Chief in Hong Kong when I was the Political Officer there, was then the Director of Operations and he was the one that was handing out the pink slips and in due course he got one himself. But Stan Turner was trying to remake, remold the intelligence community and he was trying to make the intelligence community a more cohesive organization. I can tell you quite frankly that it was far from cohesive at the time. It consists of Intelligence and Research in the Department of State, the DIA, the Office of Naval Intelligence, Military Intelligence which is run by the Army, and then of course the Central Intelligence Agency. In trying to bring all of these disparate people together in to one smoothly functioning organization, I think at the moment Deutch is having his problems with that, and its been the problem ever since. It

has been the problem since the beginning, and DIA in particular we always regarded as being a maverick. They would go off and do things, they tried to run covert operations for example, not one of which to the best of my knowledge ever seemed to succeed. I was in charge of Human Intelligence Collection and I would have to review these things and I would look at these “pie in the sky” operations which were presented to me and wonder who in the dickens dreamed these up. They seemed to be so dreadfully impractical and unworkable. I won't go into them, I can't.

Q: Could you explain what your office did and what was your responsibility? And this was 1978?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, 1978. My office was in charge of human intelligence collection trying to maintain liaison with these other components also in the same business. Seeing what we could do to help coordinate, to handle issuing orders for NIE, National Intelligence Estimates, and looking over the end product to see if it measured up to the standards that were required. Making sure that there were no overlaps in what was being done and just to see that the intelligence community was being managed as a unit rather than a collection of warring states.

Q: That sounds a little bit like the General Accounting Office, in a way.

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, something like that.

Q: Who did you report to? Not you specifically, but your office?

HOLDRIDGE: First of all, of course I reported to Frank, who was the head of the whole Intelligence Community staff and then through him to Stan Turner. Stan Turner used to take a great interest in this effort to try to coordinate the collection of intelligence for which I gave him the greatest amount of credit. To try to centralize it, to point everybody in the same direction and make sure that people supplemented each other rather than contradicting each other.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about the reactions to this effort from the military, the CIA and the State Department?

HOLDRIDGE: They were not particularly happy with the idea that there was supposed to be a centralized control. More or less they kind of “bit the bullet” and went along. Stan Turner was a very dynamic personality, still is as far as I know. I read things from him from time to time. I had the least amount of problems from the Central Intelligence Agency and I got to know their people out there pretty well. Of course, I was only there for about three or so months and then all of a sudden I became the National Intelligence Officer for China. My predecessor, Jim Lilley, who had been in Beijing when I was there and in fact the Station Chief, as far as I know he was the only representative of the agency but there may have been more in the woodwork, the communicators, of course. Be that as it may, Jim was the NIO for China.

Q: In where?

HOLDRIDGE: In the National Intelligence Council, which is sort of a part of the Office of the Director of Central Intelligence. Their job was to coordinate all of the various functions going on within CIA pertaining to their particular area. There was an NIO for China, an NIO for the Soviet Union, Latin America, Africa, for Science and Technology and so on.

Q: Before we get into this I want to go back, I want to ask you a question that has always concerned me and that is with human intelligence. The normal State Department thing is we go out, we read the newspapers, we talk to people and both by contact with people and by absorbing things we come back with our own analysis of the situation. The CIA part of it, and I've been involved with it once in a while slightly on this, often will hire somebody, they pay a person to give them information. I've always been concerned with the fact that when you pay somebody to give you information, which is done covertly, that they have to produce a product and by doing this there is a natural corruption of the product itself. Because they have to produce. Was there a concern, do you see what I'm getting at?

HOLDRIDGE: I was not aware that we had too many “consultants.” It was the station's responsibility to get the intelligence that they collect and it would come in C-3 or B-2 or A-1 which is something unusual.

Q: The B-3 means reliability, it's a way of grading.

HOLDRIDGE: They always used to put the source on top of it and consequently that would influence the degree of credibility which you might attach to the report which was furnished.

I found that being over there, going through all of the requisite degrees of tests and so on, that I was sort of absorbed into the fold. They treated me like everyone else. I got to know a lot of those people and respect them immensely. I think that with all of its problems, some of the better people in the government were in the agency. The problem was up at the top, not among those who were lower down, who were hard working and devoted individuals. I think that perhaps they got too bureaucratically set in their ways over the years and too jealous of their own prerogatives, I don't know. Of course, I was there from 1978 to 1981 and in those days I didn't seem to see that degree of difficulty. These differences between the various collection agencies was all very much apparent. One of the jobs that I had was organizing National Intelligence Estimates, and here is where you would really have fun, because the representatives of the other agencies would come in and sit at the table and then you would have a bunch of analysts from each one of these various groups to try to hammer out a set of precepts and then to come up with an agreed-upon position, that was not always the easiest thing to do.

Q: You were there until 1981, in a way you missed almost the fun times, that's when Casey came in and we had a real change. In my estimation probably not for the better.

HOLDRIDGE: My wife had been working on the Reagan-Bush campaign, she started out working for George Bush because of her affinity to George Bush due to our being

assigned together in Beijing, and then when Reagan came along she continued to work with the campaign and among others she met Casey. Casey, then knowing who I was took me aside, he had just come in, this was the earlier part of his assignment and he took me aside and he said “John, I'm really going to shake this organization up and I'm going to put a great deal more emphasis on analysis than had been the case before. I don't think the analytical product is up to standards and I'm going to make darn sure that it is.” I didn't remain very much longer, but they had some pretty sharp people. I was amused the other day to read about the man who was in charge of the military evaluations as an NIO for Strategic Affairs or whatever, was a gentleman named Paul Gorman, at that time a Major General in the U.S. Army detailed to the CIA, as was I as an NIO, and somebody once described to me that when you talk to him it's like taking a drink with a fire hose. A book I read lately talked about him being soft spoken and that couldn't have been farther off the mark. Anyway, they had some very bright people, I thought, as NIOs.

Q: When you were there, and I realize that you were moving into the intelligence field and this is classified, but at the same time, time has passed, how were we viewing China in those days from 1978 to 1981?

HOLDRIDGE: China in 1981 was being viewed as a country with which we could cooperate increasingly with respect to the Soviet Union. Just as I think I mentioned to you on one of our earlier sessions, that Mao Zedong accused Kissinger of trying to stand on China's shoulders to get at the Soviet Union. We already had interests in common, shall we say. We managed to work out accommodations with the Chinese in the military sense which I considered quite beneficial, I guess I can't really go into those either.

Q: Well, one can sort of imagine. Correct me if I'm wrong, but we looked at China as being almost somewhat benign at the time as opposed to the Soviet Union which was very dangerous. You were there during the time when next to the Cuban Missile Crisis, the takeover of Afghanistan, really changed attitude, you just couldn't work with the Soviet Union.

HOLDRIDGE:We couldn't work with the Soviet Union well anyway. The Soviets throughout the period of the Cold War were obvious antagonists. The enemy of our enemy is our friend. I as NIO went out to China and saw democracy wall, talked to the Station Chief, visited places like Xian and Shanghai and so on, and saw that there almost immediate improvements were going on, just in front of your very eyes, in the living conditions of the Chinese people. So China seemed to be on the right track, we were having our flow of Chinese students coming into the United States beginning, and numbers did come and are still coming thank heaven. China seemed to be going in the right direction, we had common interests against a common enemy and the trade picture was beginning to look more favorable for Americans. American corporations were moving in the direction of China. So there were no real problems. China was not exactly an ally but it was a friendly “non-allied” state, and that's the way we treated it.

Q: Was there any action regarding China, the United States and North Korea at that time?

HOLDRIDGE: I can tell you one thing, when I got to be Assistant Secretary of State I went to China in July 1981 with Al Haig who was Secretary of State, and we had our usual conversations with the Chinese but while we were sitting in Deng Xiaoping's presence Deng motioned to Al and to me and said “I have something I'd like to impart to you privately.” So we got up and walked behind a screen and into a side room and Deng Xiaoping said that he wondered if it might not be possible for the United States to withdraw from Korea militarily, and if this was not possible, would it not be possible for the United States at least to move its forces away from the DMZ down to the southern part of South Korea? We didn't give him any answer on that of course, all we said was that we would report back what he had said. I don't think there was any doubt that he was responding to some requests from the North Koreans to pass the message to the Secretary of State of the United States. There was a closer relationship then, but I think even then it was beginning to fray. The Chinese became rather upset about this constant hard line that the

North Koreans were giving out and they were tied to them by Mutual Defense Treaty and they certainly didn't want to be sucked into another Korean War.

Q: Was there concern in the Chinese leadership about supporting North Korea, as far as economically?

HOLDRIDGE: I have no doubt that the economics also figured in. The Chinese were having their own problems. They had discovered belatedly that their population was a heck of a lot larger than six hundred million and they were trying to organize their economy in such a way that people would be given a better deal and they would be freed up. They also had to generate capital or use their capital resources in ways which would be beneficial to the greatest number of people and certainly the North Koreans were in a terrible state economically. That has been persistent throughout their history, thanks to the same sort of thing that drove China into its predicament. That is, putting politics in command. Whereas China had its little idea under Mao of “National Self Reliance,” rely on yourself for the greater production, the North Koreans had this thing that translates into something like “do it yourself.” It's called “Juche.” The same kind of thing, use your own resources and of course North Korea has far fewer resources than China, so they were in dire straits. At any rate, we watched North Korea with considerable interest and maybe I recounted to you the 1969 episode before I had gone to the National Security Council, when the North Koreans actually sent about three hundred and fifty people south of the DMZ to infiltrate and to cause trouble, and the South Korean army, especially their reserve forces, were out on the field for about three months to catch these people and eliminate them. Part of this little program involved a company of North Koreans dressed in South Korean uniforms marching down the street which led to the Blue House in Seoul in military step, and they were going to shoot the President. Of course there was the Pueblo episode and that happened when I was in INR.

Q: So you were with the CIA as a seconded officer.

HOLDRIDGE: First, for China I might say and shortly thereafter there was an NIO for the rest of East Asia. Nat Thayer who had come from SAIS, the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins, had that job, and I don't know what Nat had done. He got Stan Turner thoroughly annoyed with him and got booted out. So in addition to being NIO for China I became NIO for China, East Asia and the Pacific, the acronym for which was CHEAP. [laughter] Actually we dropped the CH and it just became EAP.

Q: While you were there, basically we're talking about towards the end of the Carter administration.

HOLDRIDGE: I came in at the end of the Carter administration. For over two years of the Carter administration I was following China very avidly, Vietnam also.

Q: What was the view with Vietnam at that time?

HOLDRIDGE: As an implacable enemy. We had no sympathy for the North Vietnamese and of course back to my days as head of INR/EAP I'd watch the North Vietnamese. It took them three years to change one word. The bombings were going on and the North Vietnamese wanted the bombing stopped. They kept saying if the bombings ceased, there “could” be talks. That went on for this unconscionable length of time, they stuck to this word “could” and finally they got around to changing it to “would” which opened the Paris talks, and those took another three years or so to materialize into something that really paid off.

Q: Did you feel from where you were, looking at it from the intelligence side during this Carter period, was there any effort made or looking for gestures of maybe we can do something with the Vietnamese?

HOLDRIDGE: No, as a matter of fact I was present at the, not at the original formulation of this operation, I think it may have been cooked up by Al Haig or maybe some bright guy

in the Pentagon, Lang Son II, or whatever, in which we ferried I guess a division worth of South Vietnamese troops into Laos...

Q: We're back in a different era now?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, well anyway I was present at this thing, and the South Vietnamese were shot to shreds and came out hanging onto the skids of helicopters and so on. So at any rate, what I was involved with as NIO more than anything else, was to try to do what I could on the POW-MIA issue. That continued on until I became Assistant Secretary of State, but the POW issue was very much before the general public at the time. I also had some interesting things I was doing with Japan. I was concerned about the long-term relationship between the U.S. and Japan, and as NIO I went around and collected a number of senior academics, people who were supposed to have been well informed on Japan, and arranged a three day seminar at the Agency, bringing these people in and bringing in analysts from various parts of the intelligence community to sit there and exchange ideas about Japan. I've got to say that I thought it was a very useful operation because it raised some very interesting questions about the long-term direction Japan would take and whether the presence of American forces was desirable or not. Nobody advocated pulling out American troops, by the way. I had Ezra Vogel and there was a fellow whose name eludes me, so we brought in quite a few, and Dick Stilwell came over from the Pentagon. Do you know Dick?

Q: Yes, we were in Korea together.

HOLDRIDGE: Dick unfortunately passed away a couple of years ago but I admired him. I thought he was a very fine military man and a man who could perceive often enough that the “Emperor had no clothes”.

Q: I was there in Korea where the Ambassador was Dick Sneider and these two gentleman, one was a military commander and one was the American Ambassador and

they were two very strong minded people. They didn't sort out who was in charge there at all, it was nose to nose most of the time.

HOLDRIDGE: In South Korea, while I was NIO, I visited there in my capacity and was "wined and dined" by the Director of the South Korean CIA, which later became the National Research Agency. When I went back to my hotel, a very fine hotel in Seoul, and went up to my room on one of the upper levels of the hotel where I had a beautiful view of Seoul, waiting for me just outside of the elevator was a Korean "popsy," planted obviously by my host for the evening. I told her no thanks, much to her utter disappointment. But I was not about to do anything of that sort which was against my inclinations anyway, but also what this guy was trying to do was to put some strings on me. This was part of the game they had.

Q: At this seminar on Japan, was there any consensus (we're talking about 1979 or 1980) about where Japan was going?

HOLDRIDGE: What we came up with as I recall, is that we had to be very careful in our handling of Japan at that time. It was feeling its economic oats, the deficit in our trade balance was something growing year by year and the Japanese were, I think, taking pleasure in the fact that they were "out gunning" the Americans economically speaking. On the other hand we needed them militarily for our bases there, our strategic reserve in East Asia was and still remains what is essentially based on Okinawa. We were using Yokosuka and we were using other air bases up in the northern part of Honshu. Misawa was up there, and it was important for us to keep track of what the Soviets were doing from Japan, and to have a strategic reserve handy there in case of eventualities. The one problem that I recall, and this sticks vividly in my mind, which Dick Stilwell brought out, concerned the Japanese self defense forces. Although numerically they were not inconsequential, they were fairly substantial, at the same time their aircraft only flew about four or five hours a month, with pilots in them. The pilots didn't get much training or aviation fuel. The JP-4 ration was low, their ammunition reserves were about three

months—period, and the Japanese were overly concerned about the defense of Hokkaido and most of their armor and infantry seemed to be concentrated where they thought the Soviets might come in. It was all sort of skewed, and there was no such thing as a Joint Chiefs of Staff of any consequence in Japan. There was an organization called the Joint Chiefs of Staff but no one branch of the service was responsible to a single head. Each ran its own way, the man at the top was only an advisor. That was an inherent weakness that we saw on the Japanese military forces and that emerged as well.

Q: Just to get a feel for the time, was there any feeling that the Japanese are doing wonderfully economically, (at that point) but one can look at Japan and feel that it has major vulnerabilities as far as long term economics go, not many resources, a population that was not very good at dealing with foreigners and that sort of thing?

HOLDRIDGE: Oh yes. One of the things of course we regretted as an inherent weakness in Japan was its dependence on outside sources of energy. The greater part of which came through the Straits of Malacca or in terms of LNG from Indonesia.

Q: LNG is?

HOLDRIDGE: Liquefied Natural Gas, that was the big thing in Indonesia. While the Japanese were very involved in LNG, exploitation came in by LNG tankers: specially built ships which could take this stuff as liquefied form and keep it refrigerated long enough for it to get to Japan. A wonderful fuel because when you burn it, mostly methane, in fact I think it was all methane, and the only byproduct of that is H2O. For a country concerned about pollution, it was very important. Anyway, we were sensitive to the fact that it was very important to keep the supply lines between the Middle East and Japan open, that's one of the reasons why Diego Garcia was important, why the position we had in Singapore was important, why we wanted to hang onto the Clark and Subic for as long as we could.

Q: These are two bases in the Philippines.

HOLDRIDGE: Yes.

Q: So the Reagan Administration came in in early 1981 and that had a big change for you then didn't it? What happened with you?

HOLDRIDGE: Even before it happened I had already been tipped off by Bill Casey, of all people, that they had something good waiting for me in the new Reagan Administration, and then when Al Haig came in as the Secretary of State designate, as is the custom, he set up a suite of offices down on the first floor of the Department of State, he called me down and said he wanted me to be his Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs.

Q: Of course you had served with him for a long time.

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, I'd been with him on the NSC when he was Deputy to Kissinger. Of course I was very pleased at having been chosen. I must admit I was somewhat surprised. I thought “Thank gosh, someplace that I thought I knew something about, rather than another part of the Department which I didn't know a heck of a lot about.” So, as of January 1, or the first working day thereafter, I simply walked out on my office in CIA and came back in State and sat down. I wasn't confirmed. I didn't have anything, but somebody had to run the show. Without any compunction, and this is probably very illegal under the present circumstances, I sat in the chair which had been vacated by one Richard Holbrooke and moved right in.

Q: This was actually before the Reagan Administration came in then? They came in on January 20.

HOLDRIDGE: That's correct and I was already sitting at that desk and running things. Of course the first thing I had to worry about was Taiwan.

Q: Wait, before we get to this, we've got a political campaign in 1980, you've got Carter versus Reagan. You're following the Asian side from the CIA point of view but also as a

Foreign Service Officer, did you see any thrust at that particular time to what Reagan was saying as far as where the Reagan Administration was going to come down regarding the Far East?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, I was a little bit horrified by his public statements to be quite frank. Going back to 1980, the campaign year, as NIO I was designated along with two other NIO's, one of whom handled the Soviet Union and the other one handled Vietnam, to go up and brief Vice Presidential candidate George Bush at Kennebunkport. We flew up in the Director's airplane and were driven over to the Bush residence in Kennebunkport and had a long chat. My job was to talk about China and of course the Soviet buildup next to China. Somebody else was talking about what the Vietnamese were up to. We were told that we were to stick exclusively to the military aspects of the situation. Some other people would come in and handle the political aspects. As we were going out the door having finished our briefing, which was fairly extensive, about a hour or hour and a half or so, who should come in but Jim Lilley, Ray Cline and Dick Allen. Well, Jim Lilley had sort of identified himself with George Bush, ingratiated himself, to put it in polite terms, going back following his days in Beijing and Ray Cline had been many years the Station Chief of the Agency in Taiwan and was very pro-Taiwan. I don't know what he thought about Taiwan as an independent country. The third person, Dick Allen, was supposed to be the Japan expert. He didn't know where to put the right place to stow an envelope that contained ten one hundred dollar bills, apparently.

Q: Yes, he left under a cloud from the National Security Office, later.

HOLDRIDGE: We'd had our experience already in dealing with the Reagan Administration before it even became an administration, and hardly had George Bush tried to convince the Chinese in Beijing, I think this was in August 1980, that if Ronald Reagan became President of the United States he would not be a wild man on Taiwan. What happened was that just afterwards Reagan gave a press conference in which he said “Taiwan is a real country, we should treat it as such, we should extend diplomatic recognition to it,

we should sell whatever arms it needs to defend itself" and all the way along the line and at the bottom he said "Oh yes we should improve our relations, too, with the People's Republic of China." I have always suspected that Dick Allen probably wrote those talking points out for Reagan.

Q: Just to go back to the politics because some people today would know these people. What was your impression when you went in and gave the military briefing which really was interesting but it was the political briefing that was probably the guts of something to get to the Vice President, although of course the Vice President had served as equivalent to Ambassador to China. Did you feel that this was designed so that the equivalent to whatever you want to call hard liners or a certain cast of people were going to get to the Vice President for that type of briefing?

HOLDRIDGE: I suspect that it was probably leaning in the direction of at least giving more accommodation to Taiwan desires then I think our diplomatic relationship would be able to withstand.

Q: Who do you think was calling shots then, as far as these briefings were set up?

HOLDRIDGE: I would suppose of the three that walked in, Dick Allen became the first Presidential Assistant for National Security Affairs and that he had a lot to do with it and then Ray Cline who set himself up as a kind of a think-tank. He ran until fairly recently, an organization known as the Global Strategy Council, for which I think the money comes essentially from Taiwan. I don't know what Jim Lilley's position was, frankly.

Q: You're saying that obviously Ronald Reagan was, he came from California, a very strong right winger, which in Taiwan was almost a holy cause there.

HOLDRIDGE: On top of that, Ronald Reagan had been sent by Richard Nixon to Taiwan after the 1972 Nixon visit to China to assure Chiang Kai-shek that the United States was not going to abandon Taiwan. I think that, probably more that anything else, identified

Ronald Reagan with Taiwan. We had this little cross to bear as soon as Ronald Reagan took office, even before. The problem loomed even before the inauguration of Ronald Reagan, and that was an alleged official invitation to a delegation from Taiwan to attend the inaugural ceremonies. This is the way it was played up in the press. Actually, the Reagan inaugural committee was not an official body, it was a creature of the Republican National Committee, and the person who in fact I think arranged for the invitation to go to Taiwan was Anna Chennault. The people who were invited were the Mayor of Taipei, the Governor of Taiwan Province, and the Secretary General of the Kuomintang Party. This was played up in the press as being an official delegation from Taiwan, at which point Ambassador Chai Zemin of the Chinese Embassy here in Washington let it be known that if these people showed up, he would not. It was as simple as that. So my first problem, long before I was confirmed, was to try to kill this one. I used a number of techniques. I had a lunch with Anna Chennault and explained to her that it would not be a very good thing for the new administration to start off with a big row over China policy. This would not be helpful to U.S.-Taiwan relations. She saw the merit in that and said that she would get in touch with the appropriate people, but one of them was already here. That was the Secretary General of the Kuomintang Party and he came down with a “diplomatic illness.” Jim Lilley and I worked together on this situation, and Jim got in touch with his friends and I got in touch with those that I thought I could do some good. I got in touch with the people that we would then call the CCNAA, the Coordination Council for North American Affairs, Fred Chien was running it at the time, former Foreign Minister and later Foreign Minister again, pretty hard line guy but sort of suggesting that this would not be advisable. Another thing that I did was pick up the telephone and called Chuck Cross, who was our American Institute of Taiwan, AIT, representative in Taiwan, and I called him on an open line in the full expectation that it would be monitored and went over the ground rules with him. I said that I thought it would be a terrible thing for Taiwan's future relationship with the U.S. to start off with this big confrontation over Taiwan policy by the attendance of these three gentleman at the inaugural ceremonies. As a result of all this, they did not attend. The Mayor of Taipei had left and the Governor of Taiwan hadn't departed from Taiwan,

and only the Secretary General of the Kuomintang Party was here. As I said, he had a diplomatic ailment, and Jim Lilley and I went and called on him, the least we could do, it was a rather strained call, I can assure you. We started out in this way, and that pretty well colored a great part of my period as Assistant Secretary.

Q: The period you were Assistant Secretary was from when to when?

HOLDRIDGE: In an acting capacity from January 1981, I was confirmed in May, and then until the end of 1982. I guess I was still officially on the books as Assistant Secretary until early 1983 and when I was confirmed as Ambassador to Indonesia.

Q: Now coming back to this time, obviously you knew Al Haig who was the new Secretary of State so you could talk comfortably with him.

HOLDRIDGE: You couldn't talk comfortably with Al Haig at this time. He made an enormous mistake in my judgement, that he assumed more than he was capable of grabbing hold of in terms of his responsibilities as Secretary of State. I happened to have been in the lobby of the Department of State, the C Street entrance, when he came from the White House fresh from having been anointed as Secretary of State by President Reagan. There's a zigzag set of stairs on either side and he went up halfway in the zigzag and there's a little platform there, and he addressed the assembled throng before him and when he said “I am the vicar” I thought to myself “oh-oh,” because I had seen before the problems between the Secretary of State and the White House Staff. The Reagan White House staff had several people around him who were of course, very assertive in their own way. Richard Allen was the Advisor to the President for National Security Affairs and then there were Ed Meese and Michael Deaver and I can't think of anybody else at this particular moment, but that's plenty.

Q: And Judge Clark.

HOLDRIDGE: Judge Clark was sent over, appointed from the White House to be the Deputy Secretary, to sort of keep an eye on Al Haig and see that he stayed on the political reservation. But to be quite frank, I thought that Judge Clark was underrated by many people, who kind of sneered at the fact that he hadn't passed the California bar exam on his first try.

Q: I've heard other people make this remark.

HOLDRIDGE: He turned out to be a power in his own right, a man with a considerable amount of judgement, and who saw the political implications of some of these programs which had been laid out by the hard liners. I can also tell you one of my early encounters, when it was known that I was to be named as Assistant Secretary of State, I had a little meeting with a gentleman named John Carbaugh who was the number one staff assistant to Jesse Helms, and Carbaugh was all for giving Taiwan whatever it wanted, especially in terms of aircraft, this is, regarding military equipment. The Taiwan Relations Act having been passed, according to Carbaugh “We're going to give them those F-5G's.” I thought to myself there's going to be a little problem here because the F-5G would have been a quantum jump even though it was a follow-up to the F-5E; it was a much more capable aircraft as an interceptor and I thought that the Chinese would have fits over that, which they did. To complicate the whole issue of the F-5G, the commander of the Taiwan air force early on talked to a New York Times correspondent about how Taiwan was going to receive the F-5G's and how this would materially improve Taiwan's air capacity, and spoke in very confident terms. We got protests from the Chinese immediately on this subject. This was an issue that was to last almost throughout my entire period as Assistant Secretary from January 1981 or until the time we signed the Joint Communique on Arms Sales to Taiwan of August 17, 1982.

Q: Why don't we follow through on the China thread and in the next interview we can carry on with other parts of this epic. In the first place you mentioned Al Haig got off on the

wrong foot, but how did you deal with him in the beginning? Did he say what he wanted? Was he more realistic than the hard liners?

HOLDRIDGE: He understood the necessity from a military standpoint of keeping a good working relationship with China and also from a political standpoint. Let me tell you that my friend Dick Allen, this is only a few weeks into the new Reagan Administration, President Chun Doo Hwan, of South Korea, was invited to come to the United States, and this was a reward for removing a death sentence from Kim Daijung, leader of the Korean Opposition Party, and putting him in house arrest from which he was eventually, it was understood, to be released entirely. So as a good reward for all of that, Chun Doo Hwan was invited to pay an official visit to the United States. In he comes in the usual helicopter from Andrews, settled down at the landing ground at the end of the reflection pool. We all piled into our limousines, I was out there as part of the welcoming crew. We went into the diplomatic entrance of the White House, you go in that curved driveway and then there's this entryway with a covering over it, and we went in. The rest of the gang couldn't join the two Presidents, who were off talking together in the Oval Office which was a typical Presidential prerogative. While we were milling around, Dick Allen comes up to me and says “Oh hey, I was talking to the President the other night and he's agreed to office calls.” Office calls? Well, that horrified me, what that meant was that anyone from the CCNAA who wanted to do business with the United States could come to the Department of State.

Q: CCNAA is in effect the unofficial Embassy of Taiwan.

HOLDRIDGE: That is correct. The Coordination Council for North American Affairs, which is now called the Taipei Cultural and Economic Office in the U.S.

Q: However you slice it, that's what it is.

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, well, however you slice it it's still the same thing. What's in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet. Regardless, I could see the diplomatic fallout from that. If somebody such as the head of CCNAA, such as Fred Chien were to

make a call on the Secretary of State, that would be immediately picked up by the press and the Chinese would blow their stacks. I don't know if I mentioned it earlier that what blew the Cy Vance trip in 1977 out of the water was he in effect recommended that we change the Liaison Office in Beijing for the Embassy in Taipei, just exchange them, but leaving the conditions under which they operated much the same. Of course the Chinese had in effect given us diplomatic status, and if CCNAA by virtue of being able to make calls on members of the government, including the Department of State at high levels, if that permission were granted, then in effect Taipei would have diplomatic status. This is something that would have been absolutely unacceptable. All I could do was run to Al Haig and tell him what Dick Allen had wrought—what God hath wrought let no man tear asunder—but Al Haig did his damnedest and we were able to arrange that at working levels and other departments of government, Commerce, the Pentagon, wherever, working level people from CCNAA could call on their opposite numbers but they could not enter the Department of State. Our contacts with them and with official visitors or people that had official capacity in Taiwan, when they came to the U.S. we would meet them on neutral ground. For example, the Governor of the Bank of Taiwan. I remember going to a reception in the Hay-Adams, and that was okay, and I used to go to their Double Ten affairs, that's the Chinese Taiwan National Day.

Q: The 10th of October.

HOLDRIDGE: That's right. They put on two, they had one big splurge which was public and then they had a very private one in their own offices, which in those days was up there on River Road, not too far from here, in what had formerly been the Holiday Inn Hotel chain headquarters. It was out of the public sight and not publicized in any way. This was our first crisis to get over this idea of official calls at high level.

Q: How did you find Al Haig, did he sort of carry the water, he was the person who dealt with the Reagan White House, wasn't he?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, and I think that the whole relationship was from the very beginning extremely tense. Michael Deaver, Ed Meese and Dick Allen, none of them was going to allow Al Haig unimpaired access to the President or unimpaired definition of foreign policy for the United States. I remember being called up to Haig's office one night, and as I came in one door he came in the other just back from the White House, muttering about “Boy, if you thought Kissinger or Brzezinski were bad, what about that hydra-headed monster over at the White House now?”

Q: Both Kissinger and Brzezinski were strong people. One doesn't get the feeling that under Reagan there was the equivalent. Allen was certainly not that powerful a person.

HOLDRIDGE: I think Deaver and Meese in particular were both very jealous of their prerogatives. It made Al very tense, and meanwhile he'd had several bypasses, I don't know whether he had a triple bypass or whatever.

Q: Talking about heart surgery.

HOLDRIDGE: I had been told by somebody who knew more about it than I knew, that after a bypass operation you can go in either one of two directions, either become more tense and go up hill or less tense and go downhill. Henry Kissinger had a triple bypass and he told me “When you're lying there to all intents and purposes dead on the operating table, your heart is disconnected and your blood is being pumped through a machine, it gives you time to think about mortality.” And so Kissinger became much more calm, while Haig went the other direction. He was told by his doctor that he shouldn't smoke, he smoked like a chimney. He became very tense, very hard to deal with. Always with that same degree of mental judgement, his judgement was not impaired.

Q: How did the arms deal with Taiwan work itself out? What were you doing on that?

HOLDRIDGE: What we did in the first place was after a decent interval of time, Haig asked for National Security Council consent, that a study be made as to whether or

not Taiwan really needed the F-5G. This goes back to an interpretation of the Taiwan Relations Act, one clause which said that the United States would sell or make available to Taiwan such items of a military nature required for its defense which in OUR judgement and the judgement of the Congress and the Administration are needed for the defense of Taiwan. That gave us an out. We asked the DIA to prepare the study on whether Taiwan really needed the F-5G. To jump ahead a few months, toward the end of 1981 the judgement was that Taiwan did not need the F-5G. The question was, then, under what circumstances would we convey the decision to China. In the meanwhile we had information from a very high ranking gentleman who later became Ambassador to the U.S. to replace Chai Zemin, that was Zhang Wenjin, an old colleague and I hope friend of mine, died some years ago, but a very fine representative and a very fine person. I met Zhang Wenjin in the United Nations GA, I used to go with Haig in the summertime, and in 1981 he (Zhang) let it be known that they'd lived with the coproduction of the F5-E and F series for quite some time, and could probably be able to stomach that, but to go on to a higher category of aircraft, he didn't think that would go over so well. He came down to Washington later on, I think it was October when I talked to him, and then he came down in November and called on Judge Clark. He made it explicit, we can live with the F-5E but we cannot live with the F-5G. About this time we were going through this drill of getting that study prepared. As I say, when the study came out it was determined that Taiwan with the F-5E, putting it up against what the Chinese on their side were able to muster, was more than adequately able to handle the threat from a MiG 21. The F-5G's problem was that it did not have much in the way of loiter time, it was built as an interceptor. You get up, shoot your target down and then return to your base and then you refuel. Well the MiG-21 is essentially a fighter, and doesn't have that much range or fuel capacity, either. At that time the balance was being maintained and they could go ahead.

Q: Having served as long as you did in the National Security Council, during this period that you were Assistant Secretary, did you deal with the Reagan National Security Council?

HOLDRIDGE: I don't think we had any vast problems. We were able to get through a number of rather interesting decisions as a matter of fact. Not too long after I became Assistant Secretary of State the question came up that since Taiwan was continuing to receive articles of a military nature, the last year of the Carter administration eight hundred million dollars worth, (that was 1980), quite a sizeable chunk of cash. At any rate, we thought that we might try to balance things up a little bit more (this was an idea generated by my particular office the EA Bureau), and relax a bit on the sale of items of the military nature to the People's Republic of China, treat China as a “friendly, non-allied, country” and we could ease up on some of the things that China wanted. One of the things that China wanted was a set of computers to run their census. Those computers of course had a dual use, they could be used both as military computers or for totaling up the number of people in China. We had a whole series of meetings on this question of arms sales to China and also of the sale of these computers, involving a guy by the name of Lionel Olmer in the Department of Commerce whom I respected very highly. He seemed to have a certain amount of judgement. Also in this little deliberation were representatives from the Pentagon, DIA, their various intelligence components, and the CIA, and the fellow that we really ran up against, Steve Bryen in the Pentagon, he's still around, but he was dead set against giving the Chinese anything.

Q: He was from where? What department?

HOLDRIDGE: The Pentagon. I think he was from ISA.

Q: ISA yes, which is sort of the “little State Department” of the Pentagon.

HOLDRIDGE: We finally worked it out. It was worked out and agreed to by the NSC that China would be allowed to purchase certain types of military equipment of a defensive nature, and that if they provided us a list we would look it over and see what we could do. The idea was that Al Haig was going to be paying a visit to China in July 1981, at which time he would convey this information to the Chinese. And then we would ask the Vice

Chief of Staff of the Chinese People's Liberation Army to come to Washington in the fall and to bring his list with him and then we would discuss the question. I think it was Nieh Rongzhen who is now the Chief of Staff, they hang around a long time in China. That's the way it was supposed to be worked out. The NSC was quite willing to go along with the recommendations that had been worked out at the appropriate level in the bureaucracy as far as I could tell, and Judge Clark was helpful in these things.

Q: As with any new administration, particularly the Reagan administration, when they're brand new the State Department would be the learning curve as they come in and sort of understand the situation, actually you did have people like Al Haig who already had been involved, but did you find particularly on relations with China that you tried to proceed very incrementally because you had the equivalent of almost an unknown factor, i.e. Ronald Reagan, that you wanted to have understand the situation but knew he could get off the reservation very easily by press conferences?

HOLDRIDGE: We always felt we were walking on eggs. We did get Ronald Reagan to agree to a visit by Chai Zemin in the Cabinet Room of the White House in March 1981. I remember it vividly, I was there, and we worked out the Presidential position. Quite frankly, I think it was worked over by others as well. What Reagan conveyed was we wanted very much to maintain fruitful diplomatic relations with China and that we were aware of Chinese sensitivities on such things as arms sales and would abide by the previous joint communiques which had been reached, but we would not forget old friends such as Taiwan in an unofficial relationship. I think Chai Zemin went away relatively happy after that one. Then of course in July, Haig went to Beijing and in the meanwhile we'd worked out this little approach to try to put a little more balance in our relationship when it came to arms sales.

Q: How did we feel during the time that you were Assistant Secretary about the situation in China and the leadership?

HOLDRIDGE: Again, from all that we could tell Deng Xiaoping was thoroughly in command. He at that time was by no means overwhelmed by physical infirmities, he seemed to be doing alright. Everybody else was falling in line, and in his policies of reform sometimes there were ups and downs. As far as the political treatment of the Chinese, where this was concerned there would be easing up on the intellectuals, and playwrights could write, motion pictures could be filmed which were off the party line, you might say, but then people would be pushed back into the party line. We could see that what Deng was trying to do was certainly to improve the living conditions of the Chinese people. American businessmen were beginning to come in and what we were hoping for from the beginning was to expose China to the outside world to the extent that the Chinese would understand that they would have to play along with the prevailing way of doing business that existed throughout the rest of the world. Something which the Japanese have never even understood, even after all of their experience. Human rights did not loom on the horizon as a big problem.

Q: What about on the commercial side, essentially like copyrights, in other words pirating and all that?

HOLDRIDGE: There was a list of things that we were unhappy about and that we would talk to the Chinese about. We did sign a Bilateral Investment Treaty with them and we made some headway there, and the Chinese were quite responsive and helpful. They were happy to have the United States there. I think the fact that they had decent commercial relations with us had a political overtone to it. They didn't want to be overwhelmed by Japanese. They were happy to see Americans come in so that the Japanese would not be the sole or the major supplier of China's investment capital.

Q: On the subject of Taiwan, you (the U.S.) had this unofficial representation. That was very much on your plate wasn't it? As far as something you dealt with? How did you view Taiwan at this point?

HOLDRIDGE: At this time, the progress in Taiwan toward a more democratic society had not really taken place, that didn't begin until around 1986 when I was no longer in the Department. The thing that we were concerned about was the growth of an opposition party: The DPP, which at that time was not legitimate, it didn't become a legitimate party until 1986 as I recall. What we were worried about was making sure that everybody on Taiwan had the sentiment of Taiwan being a part of China and of course there was indeed an opposition movement there that we didn't know too much about. We would read about it and people were being imprisoned for becoming too obvious in their opposition to the Kuomintang. We were hoping that things would just stay reasonably calm while the Chinese tried to work out their own solution. By this time, Taiwan investment was beginning in China and becoming important to the Chinese industrial growth.

Q: Were you seeing a concern that, I mean we had this policy which in a way there was a collusion between Peking, Taipei and Washington, everybody agreed that China as one but as we're seeing today in Taipei has a very strong feeling of "the hell with this, we can go on our own and we're our own country," and this would upset all of our calculations. It's a logical progression, the Taiwanese population its own power. Was this much of a glimmer on the horizon at that time?

HOLDRIDGE: Well it was a concern of ours that the people of Taiwan, the so called Taiwanese who are Chinese by ancestry of course, would begin to think of going their own way, and while we had already assured them in two joint communiques that we regarded Taiwan as a part of China and we didn't challenge that position. We recognized or we acknowledged that all Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait regarded Taiwan as a part of China and we did not challenge this position. All that we asked was that reunification be by peaceful means, and we had said that in two joint communiques, the 1972 Shanghai Communique and again January 1, 1979, the Normalization Treaty. We adhered to that position.

Q: At the same time, when you're looking at these things realistically, this in a way is a very comfortable situation but situations don't remain comfortable.

HOLDRIDGE: Actually in the fall of 1981 it already had become rather uncomfortable. There was a meeting in Cancun, and Ronald Reagan and Al Haig went down. Reagan and Deng Xiaoping had sort of an anodyne conversation, and they left it up to their Foreign Ministers to get down to brass tacks. At this time Huang Hua was the Chinese Foreign Minister and Huang Hua let Haig have it with both barrels—they were becoming a little tired of this arms sales business, and they wanted a date certain from the United States by which all arms sales to Taiwan would cease. Haig said, well we couldn't do that, we don't operate under ultimatums, and so on, but we would be willing to talk over this matter later on. In the fall of 1981 Huang Hua showed up, I guess it was November, and we had some further conversations on this whole subject on the seventh floor of the State Department. Both sides took a hard line to start with, but Al Haig assured Huang Hua that there would be no increase in quantity or quality of what we sold to Taiwan and that we certainly envisioned a tapering off as time went on, but that we did not operate under an ultimatum, and we would not give a date certain.

Q: Is there anything else on the China relationship that we should talk about during your time and then after that we'll move on to all of the other areas?

HOLDRIDGE: The predominant issue from the beginning of 1981 right on through with China was this whole question of arms sales. I will say this, that Al Haig absolutely flabbergasted those of us who had worked on the NSDM, National Security Decision Memorandum on arms sales to China. When Al Haig went to China he was not supposed to have said anything on this subject other than to invite the Vice Chief of Staff of the People's Liberation Army to come to the U.S. in the fall, at which time we would tell them about our decision and look at his list. But Haig absolutely floored me. We had a press conference up in the top of the Minzu Hotel and Haig announced that the United States was willing to sell arms of a defensive nature, or military items of a defensive nature, to

China. Why he did it then instead of following the outline of the NSDM, I have no idea whatsoever (General Haig has told me that the contents of the NSDM had already been leaked to Bernie Gwertzman of The New York Times, and hence were in the public domain). But it certainly attracted headlines worldwide, and subsequent to being in China, Haig went down to the Philippines to attend the ASEAN post ministerial dialogue. The Foreign Ministers of the ASEAN powers got together once a year and this particular year it was in Manila. Haig was one of the dialogue partners, the others being Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Japan, and a representative of the EC, and then there was the United States. That whole episode was dominated by the U.S. willingness to sell arms to China, whom everybody else regarded with the greatest degree of suspicion and apprehension.

Q: Did Haig ever explain why?

HOLDRIDGE: Never did. In my book I surmised that maybe he got some tip from the White House that he could do it or maybe he just wanted to make sure that the Department of State would be out in front.

Q: We'll stop at this time so the next time we pick up we've covered pretty much what relations you had with China. We'll pick this up talking about China and the whole year of 1982 until you left relations with both Taiwan and Peking and also then we'll cover all of the rest of East Asia.

HOLDRIDGE: There's such things as Japan for example, the couple of episodes that we had that hit the headlines. One was my old friend Ed Reischauer blabbing out that everybody knew that the U.S. had nuclear weapons stored in Japan, and the other was the episode of when a submerged nuclear submarine sunk a Japanese fishing boat.

Q: We'll pick up all of the other things at that point.

Today is January 5, 1996. Just before we start you were talking about a female CIA Station Chief was it?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes. I think it was in one of previous episodes I mentioned something about while I was NIO or even earlier, having run across this particular individual. It was sort of a rarity for the CIA to have a woman as a Station Chief. She was very effective I thought and I got along with her quite well, although not everybody in the agency did. Her name was Eloise Paige.

Q: Alright we'll put that in. Well let's go back, we've covered China up through 1981. What were some of the issues that you had to deal with as Assistant Secretary on China in the 1982 period?

HOLDRIDGE: Well the main thing was to accomplish the Joint Communique on arms sales to Taiwan, that was the major element in our relationship with China at the time. I believe I mentioned that we had tried to improve our whole basic military relationship by treating China as a friendly, non-allied country to which we could sell certain items of a military nature, presumably defensive. The question of course came up on the arms sales to Taiwan, the Chinese harped on it and so did the Taiwanese. They had great expectations when Ronald Reagan took over as the President. They thought that he would be terribly forthcoming. Did I mention before the fact that we had indeed stiffed a delegation from Taiwan at the Republican inauguration ceremonies? Not too long after that however, I remember seeing an article in the New York Times quoting the Chief of Staff of Taiwan's air force as saying they were sure they were now going to get the upgraded F-5G later known as the F-21 Tiger Shark, and sort of presuming that the military relationship was now going to be just what Taiwan would want, given the parameters of the relationship which still had to be, as they understood it too, an unofficial one. They were hoping that things would indeed improve under the Reagan administration. Well China immediately picked up on that and so I found myself sitting in the middle, Taiwan on the one side and Beijing on the other slinging brickbats at us for either not coming forth quickly enough with the F-5G or on the other hand, exceeding the terms of what China deemed acceptable in terms of arms sales.

Q: Did you see a difference between how the Taiwanese worked on you in the political establishment and how the People's Republic representatives dealt with you? Was there a discernible difference?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, the People's Republic has never been as forthcoming with Congressional sources as our friends in Taiwan. That has been a problem which prevails right up until the present time, in fact. Taiwan was very good at legislative representation, lobbying if you will, and had gone to see lots and lots of members of Congress who became more friendly. When I had scarcely taken over, or hadn't even been formally nominated as Assistant Secretary, I had a little session with John Carbaugh who at that time was Jesse Helms' Principal Staff Assistant, in which Carbaugh said we're going to take care of our friends in Taiwan, we're going to give them the F-5G and I thought to myself oh boy, here we go.

Q: Did you find yourself on either side, acting as sort of you might say, a friend, sort of off to one side. Telling the PRC representative, that "You've really got to do something about Congress, if you want to get anywhere here you've got to develop friends, you just can't deal with us.". And also telling the Taiwanese "Cool it fellows," there's a certain point where a diplomat almost takes off his official hat and tells people how to operate within our system.

HOLDRIDGE: Well, I did as a matter of fact. I knew Fred Chien who was the head of the CCNAA, the Coordination Council for North American Affairs. That organization used to be up on River Road in the former headquarters of the Holiday Inn. Fred was there and I knew a number of people and I would mention to them, don't push it too hard, too far, too fast. I'd also caution friends of Taiwan such as Anna Chennault, not to push it to the point where we had an explosion. As far as Beijing is concerned, I said the same thing to people in the Chinese Embassy, "You better be very careful to open up contacts with people on the Hill who have indeed a lot of power." Same situation that prevails today except that if I may regress for a moment, the Chinese Embassy has not been all that effective in getting

its message across, but Taiwan with all of this money gained from sales of products to the United States, has spread it lavishly around. Most congressman, excluding the freshman class that came in in 1994, have been to Taiwan and have been treated royally. They have seen democracy and all the rest of it. Well, be that as it may, there has been an unbalanced relationship that the Chinese do not get their word across sufficiently, they've left it to the administration, essentially, to defend China policy. They have not been all that effective in working with the Congress and other members of administration departments.

Q: We're talking about the time you were there, not today, do you think they were adequately or better than adequately representing the mood in the United States? I mean, on the one hand you represent your country, but the other one an Embassy tells your own leaders how things work and what the mood is. Were they able to get the word out? I'm talking about the People's Republic representative.

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, they did travel around. I think they had enough contacts, their consulates in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York, and they certainly had access to various elements of the American public. The point of the issue was that I don't think most Americans at that time were overly concerned about China policy. It was just us people sitting in Washington looking at these verbal slings and arrows going back and forth between Beijing and Taipei, and worrying where we were going to come out in this. We were concerned, and what we didn't want was to see it become a major issue, politically speaking. Let me think, was 1982 an election year? I believe it was.

Q: Yes, it was a Congressional election.

HOLDRIDGE: A Congressional election year and we didn't want to see that become a major focus of the congressional elections. We did what we could to encourage Taiwan to play things a little less drastically, to relax a bit. Also we tried to encourage the people from the mainland to get out more on the Hill, to try to contact groups up there. I don't think they were remarkably successful in that regard because they haven't been glad handing

the way they used to. Actually the administration was doing more for them than they were doing for themselves. Organizing groups to visit: OPEC or EX-IM Bank missions, or the STR.

Q: STR is?

HOLDRIDGE: Special Trade Representative. Of course the one element of the American people that remains steadfast is its hope for keeping good relations with China in the business community. They saw great opportunities in China. They have been continually working on that.

Q: We're at the period now in the early 1980's where Japan is certainly causing us major headaches because of the trade surplus it has with us. Looking at China with twenty-five percent of the world's population, industrious people, was there any concern with China doing the same thing to us that Japan had?

HOLDRIDGE: Actually, at that time we did not foresee the extent to which China would turn into a producer of consumer goods for the American market. We were looking at it more in terms of the market which China would provide for American products. Early on Boeing got its toe in the door, the aircraft that took the Nixon mission to China was a Boeing 707, and the Chinese seemed to like those and they bought ten of them. Boeing helped out in training the Chinese pilots and mechanics. So Boeing was in early. MacDonald Douglas got a start while I was in Beijing. They worked out a deal with one of the Chinese organizations, one of these strings of letters which the Chinese so favor, to manufacture parts for at that time what was called the DC-9 series, now they call it the MD-80 series and MD-90 series, manufacture parts to be included in the finished product in the United States. The business interests were very anxious to proceed.

Q: As the Assistant Secretary did you find yourself going to Chambers of Commerce and beating the drums for business?

HOLDRIDGE: I made a few speeches, for example at the Asia Society in New York. I went up there shortly after I was confirmed and I gave what I thought, was a major address on U.S.-China-Taiwan relations stressing the advantages to the U.S. of having good relations with China. Helping to bring China out of its isolation, opening it up to American investment or American business and bringing Chinese to the United States to study and opening up their horizons while at the same time maintaining the unofficial relationship with Taiwan. I did not really go out and address Chambers of Commerce, as such. It was more in terms of Congressional testimony. I went up to the Hill frequently, especially as we were working on the Joint Communique on Arms Sales to Taiwan. Also from time to time in some public context.

Q: Were there any in Congress who were in positions of some power who were absolutely opposed to doing anything with the People's Republic of China?

HOLDRIDGE: Oh, you've heard the name Jesse Helms?

Q: Yes. You might explain who Jesse Helms is.

HOLDRIDGE: Jesse Helms is the Senior Senator from North Carolina. He is the conservative's conservative, very pro-Taiwan. I mentioned John Carbaugh before, and how I presume, speaking for Jesse Helms, he said we were going to give Taiwan the F-5G, which would have made life complicated. In our last session did I describe contacts with Huang Hua in the fall of 1981?

Q: You better go over it again.

HOLDRIDGE: There was a meeting in Cancun, Mexico of heads of state. Ronald Reagan went down and of course Al Haig went along as Secretary of State, and as I recall Deng Xiaoping appeared there, and Huang Hua, the Chinese Foreign Minister was there, and Huang in a conversation with Al Haig said that China wanted a date certain for the cessation of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. This rather shook Al. We weren't expecting things

to get that vigorous. Of course it was something that China had lived with for quite awhile, but apparently it had been rankling below the surface, it may have had some political implications for Deng Xiaoping. In the fall, in the General Assembly in New York, I went up with Al Haig who was doing his thing as Secretary and Zhang Wenjin (who was very close to the top leadership and later became Ambassador to the United States) was in the Chinese delegation, and I talked to Zhang, called on him in his office in the General Assembly building, the Secretariat Building, and after a certain amount of hemming and hawing the gist of what he said was that China could live with the existing U.S. relationship on arms sales as long as we abided by the concept that China and Taiwan were one country, but that they could not abide a quantum jump in the quality or in the capability of aircraft we were selling to Taiwan; namely the F-5G. This whole thing goes right on back to the very beginning of the Reagan administration and the doggone people in Taiwan beating the drum. Working on their friends in Washington, articles in the New York Times and so on, expecting they were going to get this increase. Of course the increase in itself would have not been all that they were looking for, what they wanted was a breakthrough, in which they could get any darn thing they wanted from the United States. This goes back even a little bit further to the Taiwan Relations Act, in which we said that we would sell items of a military nature to Taiwan based on our judgement of Taiwan's needs. Our judgement meant the administration and the Congress. They thought that okay, under these circumstances with Ronald Reagan sympathetic toward their cause, they would have no real problem and that, they could go back to a much higher level of arms purchases. Ever since the normalization in 1979 the United States had tried to draw down a bit, although to be sure, at one point we reached the level of eight hundred million dollars in sales for one year. This was the last year of the Carter administration. In those days the dollar went farther then it does today.

Q: Were you, I mean not you obviously, but were you getting solid reports on what the People's Republic military was doing? Did you see during this period that you were dealing

with a touchy issue, an effort on the part of mainland Chinese to do their own quantum jump in military capabilities?

HOLDRIDGE: They were trying to do it as much as possible with their own resources. They were not at that moment in the market for military aircraft from other countries. They were happily acquiring commercial aircraft from the British, from whom they got the Trident, they got the 707's from us, they got the DC-9's and later the MD-80 series. They were doing what they could on their own, but as far as military aircraft was concerned, they were working on home grown products including, the highest level they achieved, was the so-called F-8 and that was sort of a follow-on to the MiG-21. The problem being, though, that being a MiG type aircraft the air intake for the jet engine was in the nose and that made it impossible to mount the right kind of radars. We knew all about that, and we were willing to help. In fact, there was a team from the United States that was actually out there looking at the F-8 and figuring out what could be done to make it a more effective fighter.

Q: For somebody who wouldn't be familiar with the terms, you're talking about a very moderate type of military air capability as compared to what the state of the art was at the time.

HOLDRIDGE: Certainly. We had already developed the F-16, which was an enormous leap forward from the top of the line which the Chinese possessed. The Chinese were not (as we perceived it) spending an awful lot of money on their defenses. Their priorities (and this goes back to Deng Xiaoping some years earlier) were the development of agriculture, then industry, with light industry taking precedence over heavy industry, then science and technology and education, and finally the military. The people in the military were the last in the order of priority. The Chinese were much more concerned with developing the economic and intellectual resources of the country.

Q: To close off 1982, were you able to polish off the arms agreement before you went on to other things?

HOLDRIDGE: Oh yes, definitely. I don't recall whether I mentioned in my previous session that I led this little group off to China myself in January 1982.

Q: I'm not sure, let's mention it.

HOLDRIDGE: The idea was that we thought we had to get something going along the lines of another Joint Communique which would establish the parameters of U.S. arms sales, and this was also tied into the F-5G situation. I guess I mentioned to you that we had a study made by the Pentagon presumably by DIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, to determine whether Taiwan actually needed the F-5G for the defense of Taiwan, and the answer was “no.” The F-5 E, F series from Northrop, the aircraft which is in service in so many different parts of the world, was considered adequate to take care of the highest threat which the Chinese were able to muster, which was the MiG-21. I might add here that Northrop was counting on the F-5G as their big jump, and they were very disappointed when they did not get the contract to sell F-5G's to Taiwan, but it didn't have any loiter time to speak of. It could fly from Taiwan to the mainland and stay approximately twenty minutes and then had to turn around and go back because of the fuel capacity. This is one of their arguments, well, gee, why not give it to them, the darn thing doesn't elevate their capabilities that much. But it had become a symbol both to the Chinese and to the Taiwan people as to U.S. willingness to expand the arms relationship with Taiwan. My job in going off in January 1982, was on the one hand to say that we would not go on to an advanced fighter for Taiwan, but would in turn continue the F-5E, F production line. That coproduction line had been going on for quite some time to the tune of several hundred million dollars involved through FMS, Foreign Military Sales, channels. On the other hand we would replace some of the aging aircraft in Taiwan's inventory with aircraft which were available in the inventory, which didn't mean too much of a quantum jump. I had the problem of taking this message to Zhang Wenjin, an old friend of mine, going all the way

back to the earliest meeting I ever had with the Chinese. That was with Zhang Wenjin on the airplane that flew us from Rawalpindi to Beijing back in 1971. In Beijing in January 1982, I sat across the table from him, I had this little mission: Richard Armitage and Bill Rope from my office, and a couple of people from the Soviet side of the Department of State who wanted to talk about Chinese relations with the Soviet Union, but that was sort of extraneous, and of course Art Hummel was there, but I was the leader of the delegation in facing Zhang Wenjin, who immediately began to beat me around the head and shoulders about the U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. He was the one who incidentally mentioned the year before that China could abide the F-5E, F but not the F-5G and I think I did repeat this, that he had also said the same thing in much clearer terms to Judge Clark, who at that time was the Acting Secretary because Haig was off someplace. He came down from New York to Washington. This was before Judge Clark went over to be the National Security Advisor. It was pretty obvious what the Chinese position was. My job then was to not only tell the Chinese we weren't going to give Taiwan the quantum jump but that we would try to maintain the levels at approximately the same degree that was veiled for quite some time. Zhang Wenjin gave me a bad time across the conference table, and said something that really stuck in my mind. After he'd been berating me for selling arms to Taiwan, I said “But back in 1978, Mr. Zhang, your Chairman, Deng Xiaoping, accepted normalization with the United States with continued arms sales by the U.S. to Taiwan.”. He sat back and thought for a minute and he said “Ah, yes but that was for strategic reasons.”. I think I explained to you, didn't I, that I believed that what the Chinese really wanted was the United States involved at least in symbolic terms behind China at a time when China was about to take a poke at Vietnam, which was backed by the Soviet Union. So he said that they accepted this at the time for strategic reasons. I also gave him a draft, a set of principles in other words, a basis of a Joint Communique on arms sales to Taiwan.

Q: How did that go?

HOLDRIDGE: Actually it was a little strained but we had a dinner that night and I went over the whole thing again and told them that we had come to the conclusion that Taiwan really didn't need the F-5G and that we were going to try to work out something, we would hope with China, which would establish the terms under which arms sales to Taiwan would continue. I believe by that time Zhang had accepted the idea that there would be some kind of a piece of paper that would emerge at the other end of a long negotiating process which would be acceptable to both sides. The only trouble was that when I got back to the Embassy residence where I was staying, Art Hummel's place, the phone rang and it was Zhang Wenjin, and he said they had gone over the document which we proposed to release in Washington at the press office at the noon briefing the following day, which said something to the effect that we would replace aged or obsolete items in Taiwan's air inventory with aircraft from in effect, what the inventory happened to be at the time. Zhang said that seemed to be opening the door for an upgrading of Taiwan's military capabilities, and that was unacceptable. So I had to think very quickly on some way to handle this, and I said “Let's try this, we will replace those items which are of a aging or obsolete nature with items of an identical or of a similar nature.” It occurred to me that the Germans had been trying for some time to get rid of a bunch of F-104's that had been killing their pilots. For some reason the Germans never learned how to fly the damn F-104. If you've looked at it, the F-104 has very short stubby wings and I suppose that if the engine cuts it must drop like a rock. But Taiwan was apparently able to run these things and kept on running them. I thought we'll just get the Germans to sell Taiwan these F-104's and we would probably find somewhere in our inventory some aircraft which could fit into this category of a similar or identical nature. With that out of the way, we went on to agree that there would be negotiations. I had brought this set of principles along for a Joint Communique and they rejected that out of hand, because one of the things I tried to do in more specific terms was to draw a linkage between peaceful reunification of Taiwan with the mainland and U.S. arms sales. Remember, going back to 1981, Haig had told Huang Hua that there would be no increase in quantity or quality of what we would be selling to Taiwan and he also hinted at the fact that there might be a draw-down; that we would not exceed the maximum

amount that had been sold in the previous administration. We would not give a date certain for a cut off. All of these things had to be cranked into the Joint Communique, and the Chinese rejected out of hand what I had offered them, but on the other hand they said that they would come back with a counter draft. As of January 1982, we began this long tedious process of trying to work out a Joint Communique establishing the modus vivendi for U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, which in theory still ought to be in existence today except George Bush broke the whole thing when he was looking for votes in Texas. Six billion dollars worth of F-16's didn't exactly fit the criteria. However, that began the negotiation process which carried on all the way through August.

Q: While you were doing these negotiations were you keeping the Taiwanese representatives informed on how it was going?

HOLDRIDGE: Actually both, we would tell them what we were doing in general terms, we didn't want to find ourselves involved any more deeply then we were already in Sino-Taiwan relations, but more importantly I did a lot of traveling up to the Hill to keep the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, either the full committee or else the subcommittee on East Asia chaired by Senator Hayakawa informed as to what we were doing.

Q: The Senator from California.

HOLDRIDGE: Yes. That had been the big mistake that had been made under the Carter administration when they came up with the principles under which they hoped we could maintain this unofficial relationship with Taiwan. It was called the “Taiwan Enabling Act” to begin with, and by the time the Congress saw that and people like John Glenn or Jesse Helms or whatever got through having apoplexy before everybody, they revised it considerably. So the Taiwan Relations Act as the law of the land still exists. That is still what we have to work with.

Q: We keep talking about the Taiwanese, the role of the United States between Taiwan and the People's Republic for arms yet there are a lot of other people out there who want

to sell arms and the Nationalist Chinese were running over with money. Did they fit into the equation?

HOLDRIDGE: Oh yes. I have to take whatever credit I have in this myself. I figured that, look, what we finally worked over a long period of time and I should say there were intervals along March or April 1982, that I wondered if we were not going to make it, we were just going to fail. The Chinese press was so loaded with anti-U.S. invective that I just wondered if we could really consummate something like this, given the atmosphere that was prevailing in Beijing. Ji Qaoju who had been the interpreter on the first Kissinger trip, had been later assigned as a political counselor in Washington. I went to a private home of a mutual friend and Ji and I sat down and had a beer or two (maybe it was tea), in the course of which I asked him if he thought it was worth our while for us to continue working toward a joint communique, given the invective that we were getting from Beijing. And he said “Oh my gosh, you must keep it up,” or words to that effect. We kept on slogging through.

Q: By doing this, was this sort of on your part a shot across the bow of the People's Republic people, saying cool it fellows you keep this up and maybe we'll just...?

HOLDRIDGE: Well, I knew he would report back our concern over what the Chinese were saying. What I think really broke the log jam was George Bush. Have I mentioned this before? Well, George Bush, who was Vice President at the time, around April or May 1982, was going to make a tour of East Asia which would take him to Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. I was to accompany him along with my wife, since Barbara Bush was also going on this trip. Barbara Bush I guess needed a little bit of reasonably high level support for her meetings with Presidents' wives or Emperors' wives and things of that sort. It was also thought that it would be a good idea if maybe George Bush could stop in China. We contacted the Chinese and suggested that George Bush make a trip to Beijing, and of course the item that would be discussed would be the whole question of arms sales, not to mention the general relationship between China and

the United States. We didn't get any answer from the Chinese, so George went charging off and we stopped in Japan and Korea, saw Chun Doo Hwan, had lunch with the Emperor of Japan, and met the senior people all along the line in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore and in Australia and ending up in New Zealand. When we were in New Zealand we got the word that the Chinese had agreed. Here we were, the farthest we could possibly get from Beijing on this trip, which may have been a deliberate ploy on the Chinese part, I have no idea. But they agreed that George Bush should come to Beijing. We had written some letters which we carried with us in the event that the Chinese said okay, to Deng Xiaoping and the Chairman of the National People's Congress. The last minute we didn't know if he would meet the Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, we frankly didn't know who George Bush was going to meet.

Q: At this particular point was there any consideration of saying "Screw it?" In a way it is a discourtesy to say "Yes we'll do this" at the last minute. I mean these high level trips are a careful ballet and the Chinese put an awful lot of weight on form and the idea of saying come and see us at the last minute, I would have thought that we might have said no.

HOLDRIDGE: Actually I think it was probably Judge Clark who by this time was sitting over there in the National Security Council, he was the President's Advisor for National Security Affairs and I think he was the one who thought it would be a good idea for George to do this. Quite candidly, Al Haig was opposed, he didn't want George Bush to get in the act. I suppose my only conclusion that I can draw from this is that Al wanted to keep China policy very much in the State Department. I assume that Judge Clark had a lot to do with making this whole affair. They did not want to have China policy intrude in the elections in 1982.

Q: We're talking about the summer of 1982 and the Congressional elections would have been in the fall, November of 1982?

HOLDRIDGE: Actually the Republicans lost both houses of Congress, but not a word was said about China policy. [laughter] So off we went, we got to Wellington and then we had to go to Auckland. If you've ever tried to land at Wellington it is the most God awful airfield I've ever been to for wind. The darn airfield apparently opens up facing the South Pole and this polar wind comes sweeping in and consequently, there are very few large aircraft that land at Wellington. You have to take a smaller aircraft go up to Auckland, which has an international field, and fly from there. So, we flew from Auckland by way of Darwin for refueling straight on up. I think I did mention to you how this is the first time I'd ever seen pilots in the Presidential aircraft, start to let the wheels down on the wrong airfield, but they did. The pilot let the wheels down, the flaps went down, you could feel the aircraft slowing down, the engines throttled down and all of sudden “Bang”, up come the wheels the flaps go back up and the engines were gunned. We were about to land on Hangzhou's military airfield instead of the commercial airfield, so we had to go around until we picked out the right one. Very embarrassing. We were going to Hangzhou first, it was decided that maybe after our long trip we should recuperate for twenty-four hours, so we went to Hangzhou, it's south of Shanghai and it's a beautiful place, very scenic. Mountains coming down to the lake and lots of distinguished architecture left over from previous dynasties, and a very great place in which to rest. We were going to spend twenty-four hours resting there. It was a nice time. We didn't do anything, we just relaxed, except for a little discussion, Art Hummel and I with George Bush about what we might anticipate when we got to Beijing. The next day we went on to Beijing.

Q: I might add here that George Bush had been our representative in Beijing for a couple of years.

HOLDRIDGE: That's right, he was there for a couple of years, eight months of which I was his Deputy, so we had known the Bushes quite well. Anyway getting to Beijing, and I guess on the next day we went in to a long session chaired by Deng Xiaoping, and while this was going on, or after a certain amount of pleasantries had been exchanged, Deng

got up and took George Bush with him and Art Hummel trotted along. Art ranked me at this time because in the country the Ambassador who is the personal representative of the President, takes precedent over an Assistant Secretary. Art trotted off and they went to another corner of the Great Hall of the People where we were meeting and time went on. I thought it was going to be a brief meeting and it went on for about three quarters of an hour to an hour and they finally came back and everybody seemed to be all smiles and I ascertained later what had came out of this was George Bush, who is a very sincere man, had been able to convince Deng of the U.S. intention genuinely to settle the arms sales question with the Chinese. Once this was done, we began to be much more active in terms of exchanging our drafts. It worked very well, the twelve or so hours difference between China time and Washington time that we could work on our draft during the day. I often found myself sitting behind Bill Rope at the word processor looking at the screen and we were composing as we went along and when we got the thing through, we shot the draft through the printer and sent it up to the 7th floor for approval and then it went to the White House and the White House never changed a word. Let me add here, I've forgotten one little detail, Al Haig quit about July 1982. He's a very honest, I think, very responsible person and he kind of acknowledges what I've said in my book. That looking back at it, it would have been difficult if not impossible to have achieved the joint communique within the time frame that we were working on had he been there, because the distrust between Haig and the troops surrounding the President were so great.

Q: You're talking about our President? There was a real turf, ego, battle going on.

HOLDRIDGE: Right, Ed Meese and Mike Deaver. The Secretary of State didn't really even figure into this thing. That was one of the tragedies that it made life very difficult for a very nice guy, who bore up very well under the strain. The State Department was cut entirely out of this. There was nobody on that trip to the East Asian area from the Department of State; well, I was. [laughter] I guess I was regarded as being somewhat better than that because I had been in the White House.

Q: Also, you had that relationship and your wife had the relationship with the Bushes. Having been DCM to an Ambassador or whatever you want to call it that Bush was, if it works it creates a bonding that doesn't go away.

HOLDRIDGE: That's correct. We had a personal relationship with the Bushes. So the Department of State was represented on this trip but by somebody who is acceptable to the White House, having been a member of the White House Staff before. We did then start drafting like mad. Haig departed early July, I was on a trip to Southeast Asia at the time I heard about Al Haig's resignation on a VOA broadcast in Bangkok, and I immediately broke my trip off short to get back but that didn't stop us from working. Walter Stoessel was the Acting Secretary, he had been the Under Secretary taking over from Judge Clark from Deputy Secretary, so he was the Acting Secretary after Haig left, and Walt Stoessel was essentially a Soviet, Eastern Bloc type and he never changed a word we wrote in our drafts. To the best of my knowledge nothing ever got changed over in the White House.

Q: You had Judge Clark who was not a Foreign Affairs expert, but a very good sort of mediator, expediter who probably felt he had a team that he could trust. Wouldn't you say that was the case?

HOLDRIDGE: I think so, exactly. Judge Clark looked at what we were doing and saw no problems, and we eventually got what we were looking for, which was as I mentioned, a linkage which the Chinese had rejected back in January. The linkage was that the Chinese said that it was their firm or formal policy to work for the reunification of Taiwan with the mainland by peaceful means. In the next sentence we said under these circumstances it would be possible for us to follow a policy of gradual reduction in arms sales with no improvements in quantity or quality, looking for an ultimate resolution. We did not say when the ultimate resolution should be. There was no such thing as a date certain for a cutoff and it was acceptable to both sides. I should again reiterate that all during this tedious and trying period, I tried to keep the House and Senate committees most

concerned informed. I saw Steve Solarz a lot in his office. He at that time was the Chairman of the East Asia Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. I also saw Clement Zablocki, who was the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, who died some years back. And of course, both the full committee of the Foreign Relations Committee, Chaired by Chuck Percy, or the Subcommittee chaired by Hayakawa, and kept these people informed so that nobody could come back and accuse us of trying to go behind the back of the Congress. My particular problem was John Glenn who had been one of the architects of the Taiwan Relations Act.

Q: He is the Senator from Ohio.

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, still is. I had some interesting exchanges with him.

Q: Coming from Ohio, which is not a notably oriented state, why was Glenn concerned about this?

HOLDRIDGE: His principal Staff Assistant was very pro-Taiwan and I think nudged John Glenn's elbow.

Q: I notice this again and again that a staff assistant with some power to somebody in Congress, either the Senate or the House, often if they have a bone to pick, for example Senator Dole got very pro-Croatian, and from what I understand that is probably because of his staff assistant. Jesse Helms got support for Latin American dictators mainly because some of his staff were kind of cozy with Latin American dictators.

HOLDRIDGE: That's right and Senator Hayakawa, bless his heart, he was a very fine gentleman but he was getting quite aged, if you caught him before 11:00 in morning he'd be fine but if you went up to see him in the afternoon, he had a tendency to doze off. He had a very fine staff assistant, a young woman who would sit right next to him and if he began to falter a little bit, she'd give him a little punch in the arm and snap him to. But it was obvious that the Congressional staff had a very large hand in what emerged from

the Congress. This goes all the way back to the Taiwan Relations Act. Let me backtrack, I think I forgot one element that might be of use, and that is in March 1981, when China was beginning to be very agitated about the sale of the F-5G, we in the State Department prevailed upon Ronald Reagan to meet the Chinese Ambassador Chai. He came and sat in the cabinet room, on one side was Ronald Reagan and on the other side was Chai Zemin, and they went back and forth. The gist of what Ronald Reagan said was that we would be sensitive to China's concerns on this whole question of arms sales, that we wanted good relations with China and that of course we would continue our unofficial relationship with Taiwan. I think that helped to ease the problem for the moment. But as I said, it did come back to haunt us, that the U.S. sale of arms to Taiwan I'm sure was entering into some of the domestic situations that China was facing.

Q: We're talking about the, what do they call it, the upper reaches of the Chinese People's Republic System?

HOLDRIDGE: Right, those people who lived in what was known as the Zhung Nanhai, that section of Beijing which housed the headquarters of the Chinese Communist Party.

Q: Did something get signed on your watch?

HOLDRIDGE: Let us say it was never really signed as such, we reached an agreement on the wording and we reached agreement that the communiques would be issued at about the same time. That is our time in Washington, given the twelve hour discrepancy, I think it would have been around 9:00 in the morning in China and 3:00 in the afternoon here, we reached agreement on the weekend preceding the issuance. So I went down to the Department of State on Sunday to brief the new Secretary of State, George Shultz, on what we had achieved. I had been awakened that morning by a call from the operations center saying that the Chinese had agreed to what we had thought was our last shot at it. They had accepted our wording. Then I went and briefed George Shultz and he said, well you're going to have a lot of problems with the Hill on this one, and he also said, well,

I guess this is the best we could have achieved. I don't think he was very all that cheery about it but two years or so after I retired I ran into him at a function in the Department of State and he came up to me and shook my hand and said, “John, it worked out pretty well didn't it?” that was before 1989 and the events of June 3 and 4 which soured everything. We finally achieved a joint communique and the President helped a lot with the Congress at this time. Even before it was signed, we were making progress and I was letting people in the Congress know we seemed to be moving toward some accord somewhere along the line, Senator Goldwater was grumpy about it.

Q: He's a conservative from Arizona.

HOLDRIDGE: Yes. He showed a few signs of irritation and there were others who were not entirely satisfied, but the President gave a briefing for the members of Congress and that seemed to have made things fairly okay. The morning that the joint communique was to be issued, I made a trip up to the Hill and passed it out and I ran into a storm from people like John Glenn and a couple of other conservatives up there who didn't like it much, but they never did anything about it. My guess was that this was in part for show.

Q: Well, so much is. They know the basic thrust but they have their own constituencies and own staff and often that happens.

HOLDRIDGE: So, they had to do a certain amount of posturing. In effect even though not everybody was satisfied, Hayakawa said “Well there are enough ambiguities in this thing to please everybody.”

Q: Shall we turn to Japan, do you think?

HOLDRIDGE: Sure.

Q: We're talking about Japan from when to when?

HOLDRIDGE: From January 1981 until the end of 1982.

Q: The Reagan administration had come in, had Japan raised its head in the political campaign or not?

HOLDRIDGE: No.

Q: Here was a terribly important relationship. How did you see that relationship on assuming your duty as Assistant Secretary?

HOLDRIDGE: My job was to try to keep U.S.-Japan relations from running off of the track. To try to help and resolve some of the problems, like smoothing over the remarks by Ed Reischauer which did cause a storm in Japan, but it blew over. Everybody kept their mouths shut and nothing really happened.

Q: Could you explain when that happened and how that was dealt with?

HOLDRIDGE: That would have been fairly early 1981, in the spring March or April. Reischauer came out in a book that said everybody knew the United States had nuclear weapons in Japan. Well, everybody didn't know that, we decided the only way we could handle the whole problem, both from the Japanese side and from our side, was to stonewall. The line was, we neither confirmed or denied. The Japanese public opinion apparently was willing to let it rest at that. Then there was this episode, which was more emotional, when the nuclear submarine banged into the bottom of the hull of a fishing boat. Seven people drowned at that time, I think. That was a big sensation in the Japanese press. Why didn't the submarine stop? So we had to get over that one.

Q: How did you deal with this?

HOLDRIDGE: Again, we just let it die down.

Q: Was this a case of letting the Pentagon know, in particular letting the Navy know what this type of action, by not stopping, do not sin again or something like that?

HOLDRIDGE: Well I think that the Navy obviously must have taken additional precautions not to go running at twenty odd knots while submerged in waters which were filled with small Japanese commercial craft. Although there is a line said in the Navy that, by golly, “The Navy's requirements take precedence over everything else.”Q: In these two years that you were dealing with Japan, what about trade relations?

HOLDRIDGE: Trade relations of course, had always been rather rough. I think I mentioned in one of my earlier sessions that I had made a special trip to Japan to let the Prime Minister at that time know that we thought that the three billion dollar adverse balance of trade we were enduring was unacceptable and that they had to do something about it. But it kept on growing and growing and growing, that was when I was on the NSC. However, as Assistant Secretary, other people were more involved than I was. I went over and saw the Special Trade Representative, and the Department of Commerce. In trying to work out some kind of a deal with the Japanese whereby they would indeed be more open in their marketing. Of course we had two main issues when it came to access of the Japanese market, thanks to Congressman Sam Gibbons of Florida. One was citrus fruit, the Japanese were keeping off American oranges, and there were also American beef, tobacco, wine, beer, all of these things were being held off at arms length by the Japanese, who produced all of these things themselves at a much higher price than we produce them. So we were trying to work on that one as best we could. I, along with Haig, on a couple of occasions met with the Japanese Prime Minister, sitting there in the background and also meeting with the Minister of Trade of Japan at a breakfast and bringing up the subject of non-tariff barriers. That was one of the problems. The Japanese said “Well, our tariff barriers are among the lowest in the world,” but that wasn't the problem. The problem was what we called NTB, non-tariff barriers.

Q: There were prohibitions on certain food items and there were a series of laws, most of which were designed to restrict foreign things from coming in.

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, well it wasn't written law necessarily, it was Japanese custom. The way they handled their relationships with others. It was a tough nut for us to crack. It was with us then and it's with us to the point where the Japanese favorable balance of trade seems to run about thirty odd billion dollars a year. Only the Chinese seem to be doing better than the Japanese. [laughter]

Q: The Soviet Union was considered, having recently invaded Afghanistan, they were considered an aggressive power and still doing this. How did the Soviet Union play in the American-Japanese equation?

HOLDRIDGE: In the American-Japanese equation it played a great deal in terms of the defense relationship. In keeping with the Mutual Defense Treaty we had with Japan, we had joint exercises in northern waters with the Japanese fleet. The largest ship the Japanese had was a destroyer, but we would have exercises, and some were not too far from the Soviet Naval Base at Petropavlovsk. We had some problems also on this question of the continued Soviet occupation of Japanese territory, or what the Japanese claimed to be territory. The four islands, the southern Kurils.

Q: In a way the United States had been handed a beautiful set of cards in that the Soviets hung onto these islands and we having given up Okinawa, it made the Japanese continue the anti-Soviet stance, didn't it?

HOLDRIDGE: Right. It still is a major issue in relations between Russia and Japan. The Russian military still occupy these islands and they apparently have not gotten to the point of seeing the merits of leaving. The problem is that the islands dominate the strait through which the Russian fleet goes to get to Vladivostok. So they're hanging onto them for strategic purposes.

Q: During these two years, were there any major issues or even minor but irritating ones that we haven't mentioned dealing with the Japanese?

HOLDRIDGE: At the moment I can't think of any. The relationship that I had personally with the members of Japanese Embassy from the Ambassador on down, were very good. Ambassador Okawara was a very able man, and we had meetings from time to time in Washington, involving senior officials from all over the U.S. government and senior officials from all over the Japanese government. I attended a couple of those in the large conference room in the Department of State, and we tried to talk over our differences and we thought that maybe by talking them over we could minimize them. Well, it's a cultural as well as an economic problem.

Q: Culture seems to play a much greater role in a way in our Japanese relationship, than almost in any other country, for some reason.

HOLDRIDGE: I don't think we understand the Chinese culture all that well either.

Q: You said you had a good relationship with the Japanese Embassy, how effective in your estimation at this time, did you think Japanese representation through their Embassy and consulates and the staff of their foreign service was?

HOLDRIDGE: Their people are very sophisticated. It's not perhaps too well known, but the Japanese have a policy of sending bright young Foreign Service Officers off for two years of study at foreign universities, it may be in France, it may be Germany, it may be in the United States, broadening their perspectives. These people are sophisticated. The ambassadors are generally speaking very, very competent indeed. So you're dealing with a professional foreign service. The problem with Japan is, that policy is not always determined by the Gzimushu, it's determined by the people on the economic side, the Ministry of Finance or by MITI, the Ministry of Industry and International Trade.

Q: Keeping sort of geographically going, let's talk about South Korea.

HOLDRIDGE: We had our little problems there with the South Koreans, their trade barriers were pretty high too. At that time when Chin Doo Hwan was running the show, having taken over from Park Chung Hee, we found it very difficult to “crack the nut” of having the same kind of treatment accorded to our businessmen that Korean businessmen enjoy in the United States. It's the same thing that we ran into with the Japanese. There was no reciprocity, certainly on certain things there were, but on other items, no. The Koreans kept themselves in insurance and banking very much apart from the world scene. Very hard for American financial institutions to get started in Korea. That was our principal problem. Of course there was always the perennial problem of the defense of the realm, we had Operation Team Spirit, the annual maneuvers in which U.S. forces would come from various parts of the United States (mostly airborne) and join with Korean units, and we would have maneuvers up close to the DMZ. The North Koreans didn't like these, we used to get protests. I can't recall when it was that the two American officers were hacked to death.

Q: I can tell you, this was in August of 1976. I was in Korea at the time.

HOLDRIDGE: The nastiness of the North Koreans, and the attitudes with which we ran into. In the meeting of the NMCC, the Truce Committee, it didn't look to us that there was much that we could do about it, the North Koreans had sort of cut themselves off by choice from everybody else. They had this philosophy, which I saw more recently as late as 1992, called Ju Che, which means do it yourself, which the Chinese have gotten away from. If you do it yourself then you confine yourself to being a second class nation.

Q: Chun Doo Hwan had taken over. Park Chung Hee had been assassinated in late 1979 and Chun Doo Hwan came in, it was still a military government...

HOLDRIDGE: He was a General, he was in charge of the Security Command.

Q: Yes. How did we feel about that at the time and what were the emanations that were coming from both the Congress and the White House?

HOLDRIDGE: There was a lot of resistance of the idea of Chun coming in and the anti-Chun Doo Hwan riots didn't help.

Q: Did the anti-Chun Doo Hwan riots happen during your time?

HOLDRIDGE: I was an NIO. This was just before I took over as Assistant Secretary. My job then was to convince various and sundry, that the best thing that we can do for Korea was (and is) to maintain a stable relationship with it. If we start to put reprisals into effect for what we thought were their misdeeds, these would come back to haunt us, because the Koreans would take offense and it would make it even more difficult to reason with. They can be very stubborn, that's putting it mildly.

Q: Was there much reaction to the Kwang ju riots and the aftermath in the Chun Doo Hwan government within, say, the American press, Congress, or was this not a major issue?

HOLDRIDGE: Not at the time that I was Assistant Secretary, when I was NIO and these things happened a great deal of commentary occurred on the American side and on the Korean side from anti-Chun Doo Hwan elements in the government. In fact, one of the first things that I had to cope with when I became Assistant Secretary was the Chun Doo Hwan visit to the United States. He was the second senior leader to visit, the first one being Siaga from Jamaica. Chun Doo Hwan was given a little reward the second visit because of his putting Kim Dai Jung in house arrest, instead of being set up for execution. Q: Were you involved in that?

HOLDRIDGE: Actually I would have to say that Dick Allen deserves the credit for that one.

Q: He was the National Security Advisor at that time?

HOLDRIDGE: That's right, and he had his connections there. He worked it out already in advance that if Chun Doo Hwan let Kim Dai Jung out of jail and put him in house arrest (and of course everyone understood that house arrest was a way station towards release), that Chun Doo Hwan would get rewarded.

Q: How did Chun Doo Hwan do when he came here?

HOLDRIDGE: It was a very successful visit, I believe. The Korean Foreign Service has some very competent people in it. Preparations were well made, and I think there was a press conference by both Ronald Reagan and Chun Doo Hwan in which both said the right things about the continued good relationship and the importance of the ties between us. When I went to China with George Bush, the second stop was Korea and we made a trip up to the DMZ and looked at the line of demarcation from the South. I suppose I'm one of the few Americans who has looked at the DMZ from both sides now.

Q: How did you look at it from the other side?

HOLDRIDGE: In 1992 I went back and I was the guest of Kim Jong Il, I was there with a group, the Coalition for World Peace, and there were a few guys there, Douglas MacArthur III was one of the members, and an old colleague of mine, Art Rosen, from China days and miscellaneous businessmen and former congressmen were all invited. I happily went along, in fact I had been the year before with a group called the Global Economic Action Institute; we were trying to bring Korea out of its shell to join in economic discussions with the rest of the world. I think I really may have precipitated some of the problems in our relationship with North Korea by telling them that they had made themselves irrelevant as far as world political and economic affairs were concerned; that their isolation had been taken to such a stage that nobody really cared much about what was going on in North Korea.

Q: Which is quite true, unless they caused another Korean War.

HOLDRIDGE: That is why I think that, maybe it wasn't me, maybe it was their own idea, but at least they dragged up the nuclear issue as the only asset they have and they beat us around the head and shoulders with it for several years. They're still doing it.

Q: South Korea is going through convulsions of corruption which of course has always been there. Did corruption play any particular role in our calculations dealing with Korea during the time we're talking about?

HOLDRIDGE: No it did not. We didn't challenge the way the Koreans ran their government. Actually George Bush and I attended a session of the Korean National Assembly and met a lot of their assemblymen, and we talked to them and there seemed to be a reasonable amount of difference of opinion. Tolerable at the time, and we were not trying to pick up the manhole cover and look down into the sewer.

Q: Which is true in many countries. Italy being another one. Then turning to a place that certainly must have been very high on your agenda, moving sort of geographically south to the Philippines. Can you talk about the Philippines, how you saw it prior to going there, sort of just on the cusp of moving into your position and then the events of your particular time?

HOLDRIDGE: Our problem with the Philippines was actually martial law and some of the measures which were connected with it. No right to strike, no right to freedom of assembly, the National Assembly had pretty much been shut down and there was a conspicuous lack of democracy in the Philippines. I was with Walt Stoessel on one trip going down to a meeting in Singapore of the ASEAN Post Ministerial Dialogue. It's now Post Ministerial “Conference” in which the conference partners, at that time, New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Canada, the United States, and a representative from the EC, all got together with the then five ASEAN countries, later six. We had five on one and then five on five and we had conversations. Well, Al Haig was too busy to attend and Walt Stoessel went in his place, and I went along. We stopped in the Philippines and had breakfast with Imelda

and Ferdinand Marcos, and went over some of the Philippine relations. I felt personally at the time that Marcos was beginning to show a few signs of restraint on martial law. The right to strike had been restored, the right of freedom of assembly, the National Assembly was back in business, and so they had taken some steps in the direction of making the country more democratic. My feeling , for what it's worth, was that we should try to reward people rather than stiffing them all along, if they began to show some signs of progress in the direction of which we desired. I was the one that urged that Marcos, who was the only ASEAN leader who had not made an official visit to Washington, be invited to come. Of course he did. I can remember the scene with great interest. We had a lot of discussions, and they stayed at the old Wardman Park, now the Sheraton Park Hotel, and I went up to their suite and sat there and we talked about how they could in fact do more in relieving the tensions of martial law. I'd also stopped in the Philippines in the course of trips as Assistant Secretary, staying with Bill Sullivan out there at his place in Forbes Park, a kind of walled city. I recall the morning that the Marcoses were to meet with President Reagan, I had seen an intelligence report that had crossed my desk and it said something to the effect that Mrs. Marcos might raise the question of U.S. relations with Libya. She was very pro-Qadhafi, for some odd reason. I guess the Philippines get a lot of their oil from Libya and also they had a lot of Philippine workers there. I went into the pre-meeting briefing with the President in the Oval Office and we went around the room and we talked about the issues likely to come up and then he said, “Is there anything else that might possibly arise?” and I said “Mr. President, there's one thing that just conceivably could come up, and that is Mrs. Marcos might ask about improving U.S. relations with Libya.” He kind of laughed and he said that he thought he could probably handle that, Ronald Reagan had a good sense of humor. But by golly, she did. I never felt more justified in my life. I can say that our friends across the river there at Langley had made my day for me.

Q: We're talking about the CIA.

HOLDRIDGE: But she had brought this up.

Q: What was the status of Benito Aquino, had he been released by this time?
HOLDRIDGE: He was at Harvard, he was in this country in exile, is what it amounted to. When was he assassinated?

Q: Maybe late 1982 or 1983. But you would have remembered had it been on your watch.

HOLDRIDGE: I remember the circumstances, I'm not sure as to the date because what the heck could we do about it? Although I do remember one thing and that is, having been with Al Haig in China in the summer of 1981 the elections in the Philippines were scheduled for later on that same year. I sure as the dickens didn't want to stick around the Philippines all that time, I had plenty of things to do back in Washington, I politely excused myself. George Bush was ticked off to be the representative of the United States at the inauguration of President Marcos. This is when he made that statement “We love your democratic principles,” which of course the press jumped all over. What he was talking about was ASEAN in general and not the Philippines specifically. It was really quite a sensation in the press for awhile, very embarrassing to George Bush. Maybe if I had been there I could have looked over his statement and done something about it, but I wasn't there and nothing was done. I recall Imelda, irrepressible as she was, had the chorus of the University of the Philippines there at the inaugural ceremonies and what did they sing? The Hallelujah Chorus from the Messiah “For He shall reign forever and ever, hallelujah, hallelujah...” and this was by no means an accident. [laughing]

Q: Did you sense on this trip of the Marcos state visit to the United States when they met the Reagans any kind of bonding or coming together of Nancy Reagan and Imelda Marcos? Because later on it appeared to become rather important in the struggle for Ronald Reagan's soul when we had to decide whether we would support Marcos or not during the time when he was actually overthrown?

HOLDRIDGE: We were probably more sympathetic toward Mrs. Aquino, but I don't think there was any possibility of any woman getting close to Imelda. She was so self-centered

and she used to talk about Marcos all of the time. She never talked about “my husband,” she talked about “Marcos.” Going back some years, the very first trip that I'd made with Nixon in 1969, when we stopped at Malacanang I think I went into that, how Kissinger and the senior members of the staff had to stay at Malacanang and the rest of us were put off in the Inter-Continental in Manila. I tried to get the Nixons to stay in the Inter-Continental because the Philippine elections were about to take place and of course staying in Malacanang would have been an indication of U.S. support for the Marcoses. At that time Pat Nixon was taken under the wing of Imelda Marcos. The President had his meeting with Marcos and I was supposed to take notes but I was ejected because nobody was supposed to be present. They both spoke English of course, so no interpreter was necessary. We never knew what transpired in that meeting between Nixon and Marcos. God knows what they were talking about. At the banquet that night Nixon was talking about that day and the fruitful nature of the visit. He said there was one thing, however, that did stick in his mind and he said he would much rather have this lovely lady as a friend than as an enemy, talking about Imelda. [laughter] She had dragged poor Pat Nixon around until she was just wrung out. They had gone to orphanages and hospitals and God know what else until she was absolutely exhausted. That's the way Imelda Marcos works.

Q: During the time that you were dealing with the Philippines as Assistant Secretary, what was the feeling of longevity with the Marcos regime?

HOLDRIDGE: There were concerns. We didn't see anybody coming along the pike at the time that would be a replacement. Laurel, who was the sort of the leader of the opposition, he was sort of a dilettantish person as I perceived him, and who would succeed Marcos? We had no idea. Eddie Ramos had not really appeared on the scene except in his capacity as the Commander of the Philippine Constabulary, and so there was concern, after Marcos what?

Q: At this time was the retention of our bases there, particularly Subic Bay and Clark Field our policy or not?

HOLDRIDGE: It was certainly a very important element in it, yes, because Clark and Subic we regarded as the “crown jewels” in our defensive posture in East Asia. Subic more so than Clark because of the naval refitting facilities which were available there, but Clark in itself was also extremely important to us and we indeed accepted a lot from the Philippines in terms of what we might have objected to otherwise for the sake of not jeopardizing the status of the bases.

Q: Was there ever a question raised by you or anyone about “If not Subic or not Clark, whither or not?” Were studies done and what was the thinking?

HOLDRIDGE: We looked around and there were two places that could have figured in as replacements, one was Guam which would have been happy to receive the kind of attention which Subic was getting from the Navy, and the other one was Palau, and this figured into our relationship with the TTPI, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. The Palauans were very reluctant to grant the United States military access. The way it works, and this is one of the things that I was involved with, is that in gaining self determination the Trust Territories, those that chose to become independent or quasi independent, there was one area in which the United States continues to exercise veto power, and that is on defense matters. So if the Marshall Islands should make some kind of a military pact with the Japan for example, we can overrule that. Otherwise, they function as independent countries although they still get subsidies from the U.S. government.

Q: Were these negotiations going on during your time?

HOLDRIDGE: Oh gosh, they started way back when I was in the NSC and I think they finally were consummated, maybe while I was in Singapore, about 1978.

Q: Our policy with those islands was essentially one that at that time was called strategic denial, which was to really keep the Soviets out.

HOLDRIDGE: To keep them out of the Southwest Pacific. Of course one of the things that we did want in Palau was maneuver space for Marines. There is more land area there that has been undeveloped, and we couldn't do it in Saipan. We were rather pleased when Tinian decided to propose “The Confederation of the Northern Marianas” and then join the club along with Guam, because that gives us a little additional air space. That is, landing rights and all the rest without having to ask for it, if we ever have any money and if we ever have an absolute need.

Q: Turning to Australia and New Zealand, what were the issues that concerned you with those?

HOLDRIDGE: The Australians were good people, they stayed on the reservation with respect to the ANZUS Treaty, and we had a very close military relationship with the Australians. New Zealanders as of around 1984 got off of the trolley.

Q: This was not during your time?

HOLDRIDGE: I was Ambassador in Indonesia when this happened. There was a very strong anti-nuclear sentiment building up, even when I was Assistant Secretary. One of the things that Haig did after having been first in China in July 1981, then went on to Australia for a brief visit, and then on to New Zealand for an ANZUS Council meeting, and I was with him and at that time, the Prime Minister of Australia and the Prime Minister of New Zealand both were good friends of the United States. So we didn't see any immediate problem. I'd called on Marshall, the leader of the opposition party along with Haig in New Zealand, and he was very anti-nuclear.

Q: There was a strong element of the left wing of the British Labor Party there, wasn't there?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, a lot of these people had come from the left wing of the British Labor Party and had been in New Zealand long enough to become members of the New Zealand Parliament.

Q: Turning to Indonesia where you were to go later on, how were relations with Indonesia at that time?

HOLDRIDGE: Not bad. We had a big AID mission and we were also working pretty well with them on military sales, both grants and FMS military assistance. President Suharto had taken over and the country seemed to be going in the right direction. I went and visited there as Assistant Secretary and saw all of the right people and felt that the conditions were going along very well indeed.

Q: Were there any remnants of the confrontation between the...?

HOLDRIDGE: No. The “confrontasi” had been eliminated, and Malaysia and Indonesia had become good friends.

Q: Were there any problems during your time with Singapore and Malaysia?

HOLDRIDGE: No, not really. Singapore was still being run by the one and only Lee Kuan Yew. A very distinguished man, I don't wish to make light of him, I respect him very much. The only concern that we had was continued access to Singapore's facilities for R&R for our people in Diego Garcia and access to the military airfields for flights onward. The only problem we had with Malaysia was transit. Malaysia and Indonesia both figured in this. We did not like the idea of the Straits of Malacca for transit of ships. There's some fairly shallow water there and I learned this business of “under keel clearance,” maybe there was only five or six feet. If you get an aircraft carrier which draws forty feet, just like one of these VLCC, very large crude carriers, something in the neighborhood of fifty thousand tons or more than that, close to one hundred thousand tons. They draw an awful lot of water and under keel clearance is important. We did have one little flap in Indonesia while

I was Assistant Secretary, the Navy ran a task force through the Lombok Strait. There are two straits that lead from the Indian Ocean through Indonesian waters up to Subic. One of them is Sunda and that is between the islands of Java and Sumatra with Krakatau sitting in the middle of it, volcanic, and very uncertain there. The water is much more shallow; however, between Bali and Lombok the water is very deep, there is no bottom to speak of, and you can run your ships through without any worry whatsoever. The Navy ran a task force through Lombok without, however, mentioning this to the Indonesians. They regarded all of this water as territorial waters of the Indonesian Republic and the important thing to them was being informed in advance. We said there is such a thing as freedom of the seas and at this time we were embroiled with this whole “Law of the Sea” business. Under the Law of the Sea, no one should interfere with the right of innocent passage, warships or otherwise. So the Navy did this and Suharto had a fit. We had to work out some kind of an arrangement whereby we would informally alert them.

Q: What about Burma, anything at that time?

HOLDRIDGE: Nothing. Burma had begun to make a few adjustments, this is before they threw Aung San Su Kyi into house arrest.

Q: She later got the Nobel Prize.

HOLDRIDGE: This was prior to that. As a matter of fact, I did make a trip to Burma just before Al Haig took his “swan dive” from the government, and Pat Byrne, an old friend of mine, was Ambassadress then and it was pretty good. I saw the right people in the Foreign Ministry and I felt that Burma was trying to come out of the shadows a bit. We restored a modicum of AID. Our problem with Burma has always been the narcotics situation, and we did provide four or six Hueys to the Burmese Armed Forces.

Q: These are helicopters.

HOLDRIDGE: Right. The idea being that they would be used against those elements in the mountain area of Burma where opium was raised. Used for spraying crops. Of course you know darn well that they were used for other purposes as well, but we kind of understood that. There was also completion of a road that had been started by AID. It went north toward Mandalay, I think on the west side of the Salween River. We sort of restored a few little things like that which may have been helpful had there not been this coup and elections and the stepping down of Ne Win. He was a military type, and he stepped down and then this other group of younger military officers took over. That set the whole thing back.

Q: This was after your time?

HOLDRIDGE: Yes, after my time.

Q: How about Thailand during this particular time?

HOLDRIDGE: Thailand seemed to be in pretty good shape as far as we could tell. Our concern there was the succession. While I was Assistant Secretary we worked out a little deal with the Thai, that the Crown Prince, who was not notorious for being, shall we say, a “good boy.” He had already had his experiences in the United States at Fort Benning and cut quite a swath through Columbus, Georgia. We were worried about what kind of successor to King Phumiphon he would make. The Thai came to us and asked if we could perhaps make a special course for him to teach him to fly a F-5. The Thai Air Force having F-5's, we worked this out. On my trip, which took me to Burma as well, I stopped and with John Gunther Dean, who was our Ambassador, went in to see His Majesty the King and His Majesty the King said that he certainly hoped that this program we'd arranged for the Crown Prince would “make a man of him”. I spent about an hour there. I thought I was going in for just a brief little chit-chat, one of the formalities of things, and it turned out to be a long monologue of the King telling me of the problems that he was having with respect to his wife. She had apparently excessively mothered this young man, and the King was

obviously blaming a lot of the problems with the Crown Prince on his wife the Queen. I just sat there with my feet flat on the ground. I also met with the American Chamber of Commerce and they were very upbeat about the whole thing. I also went out and saw some of these relocation camps for Cambodian refugees, along the border. Really tragic about all of these people who had arms and legs blown off by land mines. There were two hundred and fifty thousand Cambodians at that time along the Thai-Cambodian border, just inside Thailand.

Q: Was it in your province to deal with refugees or was this pretty much in the Bureau of Refugees?

HOLDRIDGE: It was partly mine. Certainly anything that the people who handled refugees in the Department of State wanted to do had to have clearance from the geographic bureau.

Q: What was our attitude?

HOLDRIDGE: Well my attitude was “be generous.” There was always this screening process, whether people could be construed as genuine refugees or were they economic refugees?

Q: Certainly from Cambodia anybody at that point was a real refugee, weren't they?

HOLDRIDGE: I thought so. I spent some time there and watched the screening that was going on. I think that we probably did pretty well by our Cambodian friends. The camps I would gather, are now being emptied out, now that Cambodia has regained its independence. I wouldn't want to live there.

Q: Let's stop here and essentially the next time we pick this up we'll pick up with how you became Ambassador to Indonesia and the process and your tour in Indonesia.

HOLDRIDGE: That's a long story.

Q: Well, we'll pick it up then.

HOLDRIDGE: Okay, fine Stuart.

Today is February 6, 1996. How did you become Ambassador to Indonesia?

HOLDRIDGE: We had a little problem about who the Ambassador to Indonesia was going to be when I took over as Assistant Secretary of State. The intention was to send Mort Abramowitz there. There was a bid from the Philippines to send Mort there also. I may mention that twice I had a meeting with Carlos P. Romulo, the Foreign Minister of the Philippines at the time, a very fine dignified gentleman. He said “Send us a professional, somebody like Mort Abramowitz,” so Mort's stock seemed to be quite high in terms of access to positions of diplomatic weight.

Q: Could you explain who Mort Abramowitz was at that time and what his background was?

HOLDRIDGE: His background was essentially economic. He had worked for me in Hong Kong as the head of the Economic Section of what we called the Mainland Reporting Unit, of which I was the Chief. Then he had come back to the U.S. and he had gone over to the Pentagon where he was Deputy Assistant for ISA, handling East Asian affairs, and then had gone to Bangkok as Ambassador. He returned about the time that I came back in 1978. As a matter of fact I think in 1978 or so is when he went to the Pentagon. What he did in that intervening time I'm not quite sure. I'd have to look him up in the register, which may be available to you folks out there. It's confidential now, it didn't used to be. He had been with me in Hong Kong and what had transpired thereafter, I guess an assignment in the Department, then he went to ISA as, I can't recall if he was Assistant Secretary or Deputy Assistant Secretary, I think he must have been Deputy Assistant Secretary, following which he went to Thailand as Ambassador. Then we were going to name him

Ambassador to Indonesia, his name was at the top of the list when I became Assistant Secretary of State. The problem being, however, that he had not endeared himself to people in the military.

Q: Which military?

HOLDRIDGE: Our military. His problem was that he was outspoken and abrasive, no doubt about it, in the way that he handles himself with other people. He doesn't suffer fools gladly and of course the bureaucracy is over- supplied with those whose lights don't burn above twenty watts. While he was in ISA, this is when Carter came along and Carter under the inspiration of Dick Holbrooke, who denies it hotly but nevertheless, I still believe it to be the case, had been urged to remove all U.S. forces from Korea. Mort, as Deputy Assistant Secretary for ISA covering that part of the world, was the executing officer. He was the one that drafted all the orders that went out to the military in Korea preparatory to this withdrawal of American forces. Of course there was an enormous reaction against it.

Q: I was Consul General in Seoul at the time.

HOLDRIDGE: It was extremely stupid. The Ambassador, poor Bill Gleysteen.

Q: Actually it was Dick Sneider at the time.

HOLDRIDGE: Sneider to begin with, but then Gleysteen came and Bill's recommendation was to drop the whole idea, which Carter eventually did, but the military never forgave those who were in this chain of command, one of whom was Mort Abramowitz. They regarded him as being perhaps the “author” of the whole idea, not simply the executor; he was doing what he was supposed to.

Q: It had become a campaign issue, sort of a residue from Vietnam and Carter was coming in and no more Vietnam, so we won't get involved. It was part of the political campaign, so it certainly didn't emanate from within the State Department or Pentagon.

HOLDRIDGE: No. Then when he was appointed Ambassador to Indonesia instead of the Philippines, he ran into some real problems, not just with the military. The head of the MAG at that time was Dick Stilwell, and I respected Dick, the poor man died about three years ago, having worked on that monument to the Korean War and never having seen its consummation. Be that as it may, Dick Stilwell didn't get along with Mort and the Station Chief didn't get along with him. This is a time that we were feeding all sorts of supplies by the back door to the KPNLF, the Khmer People's National Liberation Front, and to Prince Sihanouk, if you could ever find him and pin him down long enough to see that he had any forces that were worthy of the name. Anyway, Mort got into this terrible hassle both with his military and with his Station Chief.

Q: This is in Thailand?

HOLDRIDGE: Thailand, yes. Of course the overtones of the whole Korean episode were still drifting around.

Q: Dick Stilwell had come out of Korea where he had been the U.N. Command?

HOLDRIDGE: I guess, he must have been commander of the 8th Army and also the U.N. Command at the same time.

Q: He and Dick Sneider practically weren't talking to each other.

HOLDRIDGE: Well, I'm not surprised. Dick was a very opinionated person but I respected his judgement.

Q: I think they're all very strong personalities.

HOLDRIDGE: When we put up Mort Abramowitz's name as Ambassador to Indonesia, a letter appeared to have dropped out of nowhere. I don't know who originated it, it could have been from George Tannen, the Station Chief, or it could have been from Dick

Stilwell, saying that this guy was utterly unqualified to be an Ambassador to anything. This is under Reagan, remember, the Carter administration had passed, they took one horrified look at all of this—they weren't prepared to go to the mat politically on it, so Mort got shoved off into limbo. We tried, I tried through various and sundry means for about fourteen months to see if the Indonesians wouldn't change their mind and they never did. About this time, along comes George Shultz and he says we'll send somebody who is acceptable and it turned out to be me. [laughter]

Q: How did you feel about that?

HOLDRIDGE: I had mixed feelings. I had always wanted to go down to that part of the world, I had good impressions of Indonesia from visits I had made there. I thought that Indonesia under Suharto was doing quite well in picking itself up from the Sukarno era. It is a fascinating country, as we discovered after we got there. Twenty-seven different provinces and special districts, each with its own unique characteristics. The problem area being East Timor, but we surmounted that. In those days, human rights did not seem to ring the same kind of bells that human rights are ringing in Washington today.

Q: Well, the Carter administration had left, the Reagan administration was still following human rights but not with the same vigor.

HOLDRIDGE: Not with the same vigor as a matter of fact, but put it this way, that they figured under Al Haig as Secretary of State that it was primarily important for us to have a good diplomatic relationship. Behind the diplomatic relationship we could do a lot of things such as talking about human rights. There were many strategic considerations which also entered in. President Suharto made a visit to the United States in October 1981, and since I was Assistant Secretary of State I went with him on his plane and we traveled all over. We went to the Cape.

Q: Talking about Cape Canaveral?

HOLDRIDGE: Cape Canaveral, our space center, and actually there was a mission scheduled which would be launching a satellite for the Indonesians. So we saw the equipment there. We went out to Houston to the space center, and we went to Houston's oil center. We stopped off on the way back in Hawaii, spent a couple of nights at the Kahala Hilton. While the State banquet was going on in Washington, apparently Suharto and President Reagan had chatted about this ambassadorial situation. It had become embarrassing, we had waited too long, which is presumably my fault, to try to resolve the question of finding somebody acceptable to the Indonesians. George Shultz got into the act and I guess he figured he would cut the Gordian knot, I was the one. At the State banquet in honor of Suharto, the President gets up and announces that the ambassadorial appointment had been made and it was me. I had to rise and take a bow.

Q: What was your impression of Suharto coming to the United States on this trip, here he was the mature President of Indonesia, he'd been there in power for some time now. How did you judge him as a person? How did he look at the United States? What sort of questions was he asking you? How did you find him?

HOLDRIDGE: I thought that from his standpoint of the relationship with the United States was (a) important and (b) good. We were giving the Indonesians quite a bit of economic assistance at that time, it reached as high as several hundred millions of dollars on one occasion and we were also providing military assistance, FMS and grant military aid, and I mean all of the works. For this reason, I suppose predominantly that is the Navy, thought very highly of a place in which to send ships in transit to Subic Bay, which at that time was firmly in our hands. The problem with going through the Straits of Malacca is what they call under keel clearance, the straits are not particularly deep and even with a VLCC, a very large crude carrier you find that there are only about six or seven feet of clearance between the sea bottom and the keel.

Q: Certainly in rough weather with ups and downs...

HOLDRIDGE: When you get a Nimitz class carrier going through, those things draw forty-five odd feet and you just don't like to go through shallow waters of that sort. So the options for the Navy were Straits of Malacca or the Sunda Strait which is between Sumatra and Java, or the preferred strait which is Lombok, it's the strait that runs between the islands of Bali and Lombok. God knows what the depth is, it's way down there. From the Indian Ocean the water flows in through there into the Moluccas all the way, as a matter of fact, to Alaska. The Navy likes it, there's plenty of clearance on either side, it's about one hundred and some odd miles between Bali and Lombok and it's deep and this is ideal for ships such as Nimitz class carriers, you don't need to worry about scraping bottom. Then you can go straight up from Lombok through the Straits of Makassar, and then from there it was an easy shot into Subic Bay.

Q: Had there been any problems with these International Waterways? Were there any problems with using these?

HOLDRIDGE: The Indonesians were unhappy about unannounced transits, and of course the Law of the Sea was pretty much in the forefront in those days. The Law of the Sea calls for innocent passage of all ships, including warships, and the Navy was reluctant to test this particular principle or to violate it in anyway. We did work out, informally, a little bit of advanced notice to the Indonesians. We'd say “Oh by the way don't be surprised if you see some large gray ships drifting along the waters between Bali and Lombok or up through the Straits of Makassar.” it was all informal and it was not done in a diplomatic note, sort of a way. The Indonesians provided us with something that we thought was important and we provided them with something which we thought was important which was economic assistance and military aid. The military in Indonesia are still the primary political factor and on top of that, the Indonesians seemed to be getting a grip on themselves. They had gotten rid of that horrible Sukarno period and they were actually concentrating on development. Believe it or not.

Q: When Suharto was here, did you find that he was taking note of any particular things? Sometimes when a foreign leader comes here, all of a sudden they fasten onto something that we never really think about, it's just there.

HOLDRIDGE: There were two things that interested him. One was the Cape and the U.S. technical (at that time) leadership in launching the satellites, and in fact we had actually worked it out that there was a young Indonesian woman, a Ph.D. in physics, who was going to be one of the crew members, unfortunately the Challenger episode blew that one out of the sky. He was interested in American technology and American achievements. We were number one and he wanted to be identified with number one. The other thing was of course, when you go to Houston, that was the heart and soul of the oil and gas enterprise in the United States, and in that we were also the leaders. He met with all of the top people in the oil and gas industry and wanted to make sure that the oil development would continue and American investment would flow, and of course we wanted to make sure that there were as few obstacles to that kind of investment as possible. So we had a lot to talk about.

Q: What about relations with the People's Republic of China? As you said you were an "old China hand" and this was sort of your main focus. Can you tell me about the time you were there in relation to China?

HOLDRIDGE: Mokhtar (the Foreign Minister) himself had reached the conclusion that one could not resolve the Vietnam problem, which was also a very pressing problem the whole time I was there, without China. ASEAN's preoccupation, while I was there, was really centered on the Vietnamese presence in Cambodia. In order to resolve the Cambodian situation, one had to be able to talk to all forces which had something to say on it, and the Chinese were responsible for arming the Khmer Rouge. Mokhtar was very anxious to have good diplomatic contact with the Chinese, that went beyond just a meeting once a year, from time to time, at the U.N. General Assembly. He was anxious to get back on track. I remember Suharto telling me once, "Well maybe Mokhtar's right, maybe these people are

changing.” In other words, Mokhtar had been working on Suharto, trying to tell him that the Chinese were no longer the threat. The Chinese were smart enough; Deng Xiaoping made a trip saying in Burma that it was more important to maintain good state to state relations, than it was to maintain party to party relations, whereas before it was always the other way around. Things were getting better and Chinese capital was beginning to come in.

Q: What do you mean by Chinese capital?

HOLDRIDGE: Actually there was beginning to be this development of the same group of Chinese showing up in mainland China and show up in Taiwan or show up in Surabaya, and there were indeed economic links. Not to the enjoyment of the Indonesians. I remember one night the fellow who was in charge of economic affairs at the Foreign Ministry, he didn't say this but his wife did, she took me aside and for forty-five minutes she really railed against the Chinese. “They [Chinese] are not liked in Indonesia because they are wealthy, because they are smarter, than the Indonesians or at least they work harder, longer hours and they have relatives elsewhere. One Chinese may have a brother in Thailand or another relative in Los Angeles and another relative in Honolulu,” or something like that. The Chinese who did the best were those that made it plain that their home was Indonesia and they were not people of the world.

Q: During the time you were there, there was no diplomatic relationship?

HOLDRIDGE: No diplomatic relationship. In fact, things got pretty sticky there for awhile. There were some riots in Tanjung Priok, that started out on a Indonesian-Islamic matter. Thanks to Qadhafi, and the Ayatollah, Islam began to creep back. There were some posters or sayings of the Ayatollah that had been posted in a mosque in Tanjung Priok, the seaport of Jakarta, and Indonesian policemen had gone in wearing their boots. They did not take off their boots to tear these things down. A lot of guys were out of jobs because there were so many old ships that were of no use to anybody and were being scrapped, so these fellows had no jobs and went out rioting. Of course when a riot starts in Indonesia

they always go for the nearest Chinese. Among other things, there were slogans painted around that were damning Suharto for his closeness to Lim Hsien Leong. In other words, the ill feeling is there, and it's not going to go away. But the relationship now is good, they've restored diplomatic relations.

Q: But not in your time?

HOLDRIDGE: Not in my time.

Q: Were we neutral in this?

HOLDRIDGE: We were neutral. I never called on the informal Kuomintang representative. There was a lot of Taiwan capital invested in places such as Surabaya.

Q: Did oil get you involved at all?

HOLDRIDGE: Oh yes, deeply involved in oil. Much more that I wanted to be. When I got there I had a big meeting with the American business community and anybody who wanted to come could come, and I said to them “Look, I'm here to look after your interests, that's my job, but when it comes to businesses, I would be happy to take up your cause if it happens to be a generic one, if there are a number of people who are across the board who are having the same problem I will try to trot around to the proper authorities and bring this to their attention, but only in a case of extreme need will I go to appropriate Indonesians authorities on the behalf of a single American company.” Well I had only been there four or five months when the phone rang and the principal negotiator for CALTEX, which is Chevron and Texaco, called me. They were converting from what was called a “contract of work”, whereby they got about thirty percent of the “take” of what came out of the ground. They were going to have to go into what was known as a “production sharing contract.” The standard production sharing contract at that time was around 15 percent and everything that was brought in to exploit a developing field immediately became the property of Pertomina, the state oil company. They were having a terrible time working

things out with CALTEX because the “old man” as they called him (Suharto) had decided that CALTEX had sucked all of this gold out of the ground for many years in Central South Sumatra and had not put sufficient effort back into raising the living standards of the people around them. So 15 percent wasn't going to work. I was told this by many Indonesians. I passed this along to my friend and so on, and then he called me on a Friday night and he said “Now we're in extremis, just like you said, we've tried golf, we've tried everything, it hasn't worked. We would appreciate it very much if you would call on the Minister for Mines and Energy, Minister Subroto, and see if you can't help us out on that.” I agreed with him by the way. The next day being a Saturday I called Subroto and he said “Come on down,” so I went down. It was only three or four houses down the street. We got talking and I said “Just off of the top of my head, this has no substance with either CALTEX or with Pertomina, but just as a beginning of negotiating, I know that fifteen percent isn't going to work, why don't we make that 13.5 percent.” And there's something else that was driving the problem, and that was that CALTEX wanted to put in what they called a tertiary recovery system, which was to pump hot steam, not just hot water, into the layers where the oil was. This was a steam flood project, very expensive. You have to have generators and diesels, and you have to have a lot of capital up front. I suggested that as far as the steam flood is concerned, why don't you work out the amount of money that CALTEX will put in at any period of time based on the market price of the oil, so that they weren't stuck with something way up front. Subroto said that he would think this over, and maybe pass it on. I got in my limousine and we drove back to the Embassy. I had barely sat down at my desk when the phone rang and it was Subroto, he said “The President has agreed to your suggestion.” [laughter] Here I had cut the Gordian knot alright, but it wasn't my job to do so.

Q: What about CALTEX?

HOLDRIDGE: Neither of them were happy. General Yudo, who was the head of Pertomina wouldn't talk to me for a year, though we finally got to be good friends again. Our

negotiating friend and the people at CALTEX were a little bit put off by all of this too. Since both of them were pissed off at me, I figured that I had probably done pretty well.

Q: By the time you were there, had the overt CIA Station Chief made his peace with the Indonesians because things had not been very good.

HOLDRIDGE: It had not been good for awhile. There was a time ten years back under Sukarno when we regarded Sukarno as being a play-thing of the Communists, and would have been perfectly happy to see his government overthrown. My friend Colonel George Benson, (who I've mentioned before, who had been to Fort Leavenworth with General Yani, who was the Armed Forces Commander at the time) flew to Singapore and convinced Max Taylor, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, that the Indonesians would never let the Communists take over. The military would see to that. We accepted that and so that whole conspiratorial attitude we had toward Indonesia and the Indonesians dissipated. As far as I know, and of course there are a lot of things I don't know, but to the best of my knowledge and belief what the agency was concerned about was the Soviet presence and the Bloc presence in Indonesia, and not what the military was up to.

Q: What about Soviet influence at the time? The Brezhnev doctrine was in full force, it looked like an expansion of Soviet policy.

HOLDRIDGE: That was another thing that the Indonesians appreciated. I was told many times about how happy the Indonesians were with the presence of the Seventh Fleet in those parts of the world. They said we don't want them sailing around in our waters all of the time, but we're very happy to have them right over the horizon. They were very pleased, and that made life very easy for me. Another thing I was able to get for the Indonesians was a squadron of F-16's. I got the U.S. government, the Pentagon, to agree in principle to provide F-16's to the Indonesians.

Q: Which was really our top fighter at that time. It was a pretty fancy aircraft.

HOLDRIDGE: It still is. They've modified it now to the point that it's twice the aircraft it ever was to begin with. The relations that I personally had with Armed Forces were good. I don't believe that there was anybody much involved in the agency, with the military. The attach#s had very good relations because of IMET, International Military Educational Training. We were sending back a certain number of people a year to the United States, to the Naval War College, to Fort Leavenworth, to Fort Benning, to Fort Sill, and providing them all sorts of technical training.

Q: These things are so important and we could do the same thing on the diplomatic side but we don't.

HOLDRIDGE: Of course we could. If we could ever get anybody over there in the White House to think straight.

Q: Congress too, it's both sides.

HOLDRIDGE: That's right. Congress is our big problem now.

Q: You left there in 1986, as you left how did you see American relations with Indonesia?

HOLDRIDGE: I thought the relations were great. I had an “engraving on my tombstone” from the same group that had greeted me by saying that my job had been to convince Indonesia to restore relations with China and came out like “Holdridge did a good job while he was Ambassador here, but he didn't achieve his major purpose.” [laughter]

Q: What did you do after that?

HOLDRIDGE: I came home and retired. The reason I retired at that time was, I discovered that if you retired at post (the position I was in, I was the highest paid member of the American Embassy), you got to keep all the allowances and everything that you were receiving there added on to your annuity. I figured it would be far better to retire at post

than to come back with my hat in my hand, wandering around those corridors looking for another job.

Q: Very briefly, because we're concentrating on your Foreign Service career, did you get involved in anything after you left?

HOLDRIDGE: I went back to Indonesia constantly in that I became the Chairman of the Board of Advisors of a company calling itself Harvest International. They were shamelessly using me (and I allowed them to do so), because of my reputation. I got to know an awful lot of Indonesians, getting in to see Suharto or other top members of the government on behalf of American companies wanting to get started in Indonesia, using the Harvest International as their vehicle.

Q: It was also our policy. We wanted to encourage American...

HOLDRIDGE: Whatever I was doing was not contrary to American policies.

Q: Just one last question, looking back on your long and distinguished Foreign Service career, what gave you the greatest satisfaction?

HOLDRIDGE: I guess the greatest satisfaction was working out the relationship with China, which of course these bright people in the White House and in Congress want to shoot out of the water right now.

Q: We're going through a difficult time with them.

HOLDRIDGE: We're going through a very difficult time with people who are not particularly well informed, if you want to put it in those terms. I'm being very polite. I also found that being assigned to Indonesia, each province having it's own distinct culture, language and dress was a fascinating thing. It was like being assigned to twenty seven different countries. I did an extensive amount of traveling. I saw an eclipse of the sun, I saw an

equivalent of Mt. St. Helens, when the volcano blew and it was tremendous. My wife and I enjoyed it immensely.

Q: Well John, I thank you very much.

HOLDRIDGE: You're very welcome, Stuart.

Q: We have one more addition. I forgot to ask about the Vietnamese refugee situation.

HOLDRIDGE: It was very easy for the Vietnamese who wanted to leave Vietnam by boat to do so, because all they had to do was head into a generally southern direction and at night they would see offshore oil fields around the Straits of Makassar. They'd see the flaring and they could head for those and they would end up on an oil rig someplace. Then they would be moved to Gallang Island, where we had as many as five thousand or so at a time, who were being interrogated as to whether they were genuine refugees or whether they were economic refugees, or whatever. The Indonesians were very good in handling them and it was a pain in the neck. It was run by the Indonesian military who would have preferred not to have that particular task. The Indonesians did a very good job in providing the kinds of living conditions for the welfare of the Vietnamese refugees, and we were very grateful. One of the members of my staff, Dan Sullivan who lives here now, he's retired. He was actually based in Singapore because Gallang Island was closer to Singapore by far than it was to Jakarta. I got up there and saw them and could see that things were going pretty well.

Q: Great.

End of interview